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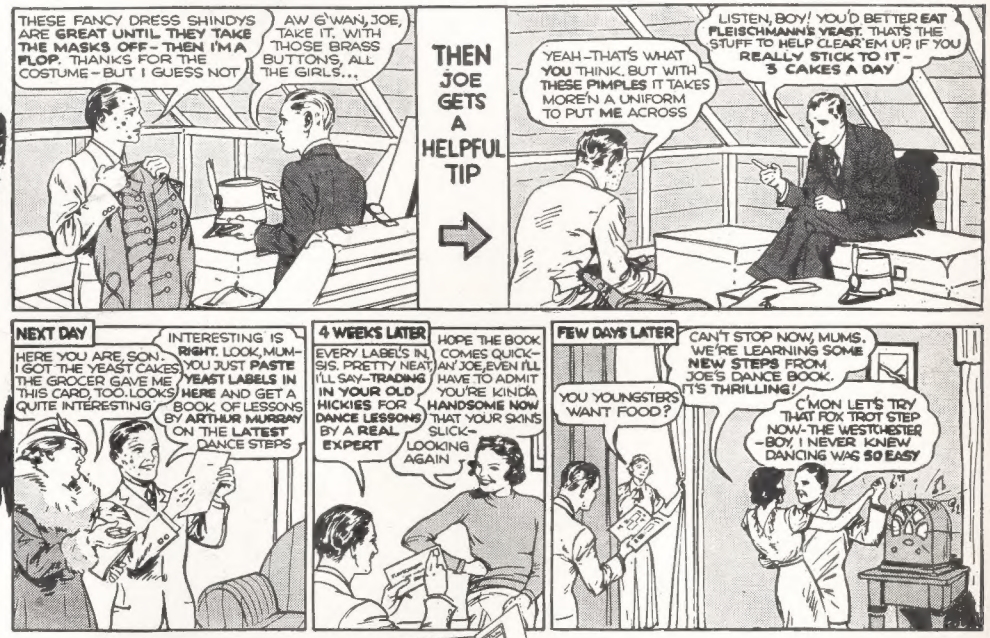
THESE FANCY DRESS SHINDYS ARE GREAT UNTIL THEY TAKE THE MASKS OFF—THEN I'M A FLOP. THANKS FOR THE COSTUME—BUT I GUESS NOT
AW G'WAN, JOE, TAKE IT. WITH THOSE BRASS BUTTONS, ALL THE GIRLS...
THEN JOE GETS A HELPFUL TIP
YEAH—THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, BUT WITH THESE PIMPLES IT TAKES MORE'N A UNIFORM TO PUT ME ACROSS
LISTEN, BOY! YOU'D BETTER EAT FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST. THAT'S THE STUFF TO HELP CLEAR 'EM UP. IF YOU REALLY STICK TO IT—3 CAKES A DAY
NEXT DAY
HERE YOU ARE, SON: I GOT THE YEAST CAKES THE GROCER GAVE ME. THIS CARD, TOO, LOOKS QUITE INTERESTING
INTERESTING IS RIGHT. LOOK, MUM—YOU JUST PASTE YEAST LABELS IN HERE AND GET A BOOK OF LESSONS BY ARTHUR MURRAY ON THE LATEST DANCE STEPS
4 WEEKS LATER
EVERY LABEL'S IN, SIS. PRETTY NEAT, I'LL SAY—TRADING IN YOUR OLD HICKIES FOR DANCE LESSONS BY A REAL EXPERT
HOPE THE BOOK COMES QUICK—AN' JOE, EVEN I'LL HAVE TO ADMIT YOU'RE KINDA HANDSOME NOW THAT YOUR SKIN'S SLICK—LOOKING AGAIN
FEW DAYS LATER
YOU YOUNGSTERS WANT FOOD?
CAN'T STOP NOW, MUMS. WE'RE LEARNING SOME NEW STEPS FROM JOE'S DANCE BOOK. IT'S THRILLING!
C'MON LET'S TRY THAT FOX TROT STEP NOW—THE WESTCHESTER—BOY, I NEVER KNEW DANCING WAS SO EASY

JOE'S A KNOCKOUT IN THAT OUTFIT! AND GOSH—LOOK AT THAT STEP HE'S DOIN'
ISN'T HE GRAND—IT WAS JUST SWELL OF YOU TO TELL HIM ABOUT FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST FOR THOSE HICKIES—OF HIS

ASK YOUR GROCER FOR THIS FREE FLEISCHMANN DANCE CARD . . .

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I'd like you to know what **Dynamic Tension** has done for me—what it has done for others—and what it can do for you! This little coupon will bring you my free book which tells all about it. There is no cost or obligation of any kind—and no one will call upon you.

I just want to put into your hands proof that I can do for you what I have done for so many thousands of others: give you broad powerful shoulders, biceps that bulge with smashing strength, a chest which stands out solid and muscular, and an evenly-developed body that will make others look like dwarfs next to you.

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Adventure

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Vol. 97, No. 2 for June, 1937 Published Once a Month

The Pride of Barney Sweeney (a novelette) . MEIGS O. FROST 8
Rum and a fight were Barney's dish at Machetero Mike's. They couldn't understand what he did in the Zinagua valley, where there was need for a man to be killed.

Traditions of the Deepwatermen (a feature) . CEDRIC W. WINDAS 26

Nine Picked Men (2nd part of 4) . . . . GEORGES SURDEZ 27
Over the wall—picked for nerve and fighting skill—the deserting Legion band has death behind and death ahead and battle in its own ranks.

The Stranger . . . . . HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS 51
First, Young Hardesty's homesteader friend had a hard-luck look in his eyes—next, it was Hardesty's problem to find who killed him.

Pursuit . . . . . ARED WHITE 65
A story of the civil war in Spain, and two pilots who settle at last a World War score.

No Prize Money . . . . . H. BEDFORD-JONES 76
The Long Tom gunner's neck was at stake in the battle of the *General Armstrong*, privateer, at Fayal.

The Fight at the Gate . . . . . JOHN KENT 89
While Halali tribesmen batter the post on the India northwest frontier, a risaldar major meets the problem of a white man who won't fight back.

Night Runner . . . . . RAYMOND S. SPEARS 96
It seemed a nice job to Cave Parosh, but it called for a powerful lot of shooting.

The Soul of a Soldier (a fact story) . . . . GEORGE FIELDING ELIOT and R. ERNEST DUPUY 109
Whose soldiers are best soldiers? Here's an argument.

I Meet a Submarine Commander (a fact story) ERNEST BOOTH 118
The things that happened after the submarine sank the freighter.

The Trail Ahead . . . . . *News of next month's issue* 127

The Camp-Fire . . . . . *Where readers, writers and adventurers meet* 128

Ask Adventure . . . . . *Information you can't get elsewhere* 134

Lost Trails 6

Cover by David Berger *Headings by I. B. Hazelton, Amos Sewell*

Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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Out of the Jungles

By C. A. Freeman

ALTHOUGH almost forty years have passed since the banner of Spain fluttered down from the walls of Manila, many portions of the Philippines remain practically unknown.

Seven years ago an American discovered a hidden valley near the town of Tanza, on the shores of Lake de Bai. The valley was bottled shaped, and widened out after the neck-like chasm leading back in the hills had been penetrated. In the valley were found several wild *carabaos*, a breed of water buffalo long thought to be extinct in Luzon.

Natives shunned the valley as being the haunt of *tikbalangs*—fabulous demons having the head of a horse and the body and legs of a grasshopper. And for this reason they never spoke of it, fearing to bring ill luck upon themselves.

The discovery showed how poorly the work of early surveyors had been done, for the valley appeared on no Government maps. Stranger still is the fact that American troops did not find the place during the Philippine Insurrection, though at the time they were harrying the insurgents in that region.

To speak of bull fighting in the Far East would probably excite the risibilities of the seasoned traveler. But the Spaniards of the "golden galleon" era held such affairs in southern Luzon, near this district. During the insurrection the American troops operating in the vicinity were sometimes puzzled by the escape of natives who seemed to be within reach, and then would suddenly disappear.

The mystery was not solved until a few years back, when workmen, in clearing away brush, came on a perfect bull ring built of stones. It had boxes for high officials, benches for the populace, a chapel where the *toreadors* were shriven before the fights—in fact all the features of such places in Spain, though on a smaller scale.

The Pasacao bull ring will be preserved by the Insular Government as a relic of the past.

NO SKINNY MAN HAS AN OUNCE OF SEX APPEAL

BUT SCIENCE HAS PROVED THAT THOUSANDS *DON'T HAVE TO BE* SKINNY!

Posed by professional models

NEW "7-POWER" YEAST TABLETS GIVE THOUSANDS 10 TO 25 LBS.

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THOUSANDS of skinny people who never could gain before have quickly put on pounds of solid, naturally attractive flesh with these new "7-power" Ironized Yeast tablets. Not only that, but they've gained naturally clear skin and lovely color, new pep, new friends and popularity—in almost no time!

Scientists recently discovered that hosts of people are thin and rundown for the single reason that they do not get enough Vitamin B and iron in their daily food. Without these vital elements you may lack appetite, and not get the most body-building good out of what you eat.

Now one of the richest known sources of Vitamin B is cultured ale yeast. By a new process the finest imported cultured ale yeast is new concentrated 7 times, made 7 times more powerful. Then it is combined with 3 kinds of iron, pasteurized whole yeast and other valuable ingredients in pleasant tablets.

If you, too, need these vital elements to aid in building you up, get these new "7-power" Ironized Yeast tablets from your druggist today. Note how quickly they increase your appetite and help you get more benefit from the body-building foods that are so essential. Then, day after day, watch flat chest develop and skinny limbs round out to natural attractiveness. See better color and natural beauty come to your cheeks. Soon you feel like an entirely different person, with new charm and new personality.

7 REASONS WHY

1. Rich red blood, necessary to nourish and build up the body is promoted where more iron is needed.
2. Hearty appetite to enjoy plenty of good food is assured those who specifically need Vitamin B.
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4. Nerves depleted by inadequate Vitamin B, are strengthened by this special nerve-aiding vitamin.
5. Unsightly skin eruptions due to Vitamin B deficiency are corrected and natural beauty restored.
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No matter how skinny and rundown you may be from lack of enough Vitamin B and iron, try these new Ironized Yeast tablets just a short time, and note the marvelous change. See if they don't aid in building you up in just a few weeks, as they have helped thousands of others. If you are not delighted with the benefits of the very first package, your money will be instantly refunded.

Special FREE offer!

To start thousands building up their health right away, we make this FREE offer. Purchase a package of Ironized Yeast tablets at once, cut out seal on box and mail it to us with a clipping of this paragraph. We will send you a fascinating new book on health, "New Facts About Your Body." Remember, results with very first package—or money refunded. At all druggists. Ironized Yeast Co., Inc., Dept. 846, Atlanta, Ga.

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Address .....

Lost Trails

Luella Winans Campbell, Las Cruces, New Mexico, wants word of relatives of late Major Ira Winans, Rochester, New York, or relatives of Walter Winans, Baltimore, Md.

George N. Stilwell, 1316 N. Alexander St., Charlotte, N. C., would like to hear from Sgt. Jesse H. Scarborough, with him 1920-1923 in Battery A, 51C.A.C. or any others on the trip from Camp Jackson, S. C., to Fort Eustis, Va., 1921—Scarborough last heard from in Vancouver Barracks in 1925.

Where is Robert Pinkerton of 131st Company, U. S. Marine Artillery, Quantico, Va., 1917-1919? His friend Thomas P. Jordan, 1523 N. Main Ave., Scranton, Pa., queries.

William L. Harcus, Kerrville, Texas, wants news of his brother Henry (Harry) L. Harcus, Kansas City, Mo., fearing abrupt end of correspondence in 1922 meant sudden death.

Wolffe W. Roberts, Box 56, Amherst, N. H., wants word of Frank R. (Jack) Frost, last heard from at Oakland, Calif.

Richard J. Lutz, R. D. 1, Verona, Pa., would like to hear of Frank Fittante. They were marines at Quantico in 1926, when Lutz was ordered to China and Fittante to Nicaragua.

Anyone in D Company, 15th U.S. Infantry, that went to China in 1912, or anyone in the Band of the 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers, in China 1913, 1914—write Pennock S. Broomall, 216 West 5th St., Chester, Pa.

Frank Merteul, care The Billboard, 25-27, Opera Place, Cincinnati, Ohio, wants word of a wartime friend, James (Roughhouse Jim) Novak, grenadier voltigeur, 10th Company, First Regiment, French Foreign Legion in 1918; later transferred into Czechoslovak legion in France; last heard from 1925-1926 camping at Caddo Lake in northern Louisiana trying to recover his health.

Roy S. Tinney, Chatham, New Jersey, wants to hear from "Lone Eagle," formerly of Eagle Bar Ranch, Winnett, Montana, and any other riflemen who shot at the National Proving Station, Tenafly, New Jersey, in 1919 and 1920.

A letter has come from Pendleton, Bangkok, Siam, for Capt. R. W. van Raven. Who knows Capt. van Raven's address?

John M. Brinson, 1180 Hale St., Beaumont, Texas, wants to hear from any of the "Black gang," U. S. S. Arizona, April, 1917-July, 1919.

Word wanted of Hamilton Redfield Norvell, sometimes called "Reddy" or "Curly", by his brother Stevens Thompson Norvell, 4449 Howard Ave., Western Springs, Ill. Their father died on Dec. 30, 1936. Norvell lived in Cincinnati until 1932, went to Southern Ontario.

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28x4.75-19 2.45	.95
29x4.75-20 2.50	.95
29x5.00-19 2.85	1.05
30x5.00-20 2.85	1.05
5.25-17 2.90	1.15
29x5.25-18 2.90	1.15
29x5.25-19 2.95	1.15
30x5.25-20 2.95	1.15
31x5.25-21 3.25	1.15
6.50-17 3.35	1.15
28x5.50-19 3.35	1.15
29x5.50-19 3.35	1.15
6.00-17 3.40	1.15
30x6.00-18 3.40	1.15
31x6.00-19 3.40	1.15
32x6.00-20 3.45	1.25
33x6.00-21 3.65	1.25
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33x4 2.95	.85
34x4 3.25	.85
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36x6 6.95	3.95

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Size Tires	Tubes
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6.50-20 4.45	1.95
7.00-20 5.95	2.95

Size Tires	Tubes
33x4½ $3.45	$1.15
34x4½ 3.45	1.15
30x5 3.65	1.35
32x5 3.75	1.45
35x5 3.95	1.55

Size Tires	Tubes
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38x7 10.95	3.95
36x8 11.45	3.95
40x8 13.25	4.15

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He keeps marching straight toward them.

THE PRIDE OF BARNEY SWEENEY

a novelette

By MEIGS O. FROST

IT WAS hotter than hell's own stokehold that night in Puerto Tiburon. If you stayed in your room, you didn't know which drove you crazier, the frogs yelling in the lagoon or the mosquitoes whining around your mosquito-bar. That's one reason Machetero Mike's place was crowded. The other was that the old *Zucurao* had pulled into port that morning. They'd been discharging cargo all day. They were due to start loading bananas at daybreak. But there'd been a pile-up, up the line. That made 'em a day late. So most all the crew were ashore.

Machetero Mike's was the kind of saloon and dance-hall you found down on the Banana Coast those days. But it had a joke about it that seemed awfully funny then. It used to be the *Cantina Orteza*. But that was before Mike, whose name was Miguel Orteza, had gone dotty over one of his own dance-hall girls the way a native goes dotty over a girl down there. Then fat old Colonel Rafael Rubio stole her away from him. He was *segundo* to old General Ramon Nateras, who was *jefe* at the port.

The only thing Mike could have done about it was kill him, and Mike was no fighter. All he did was weep and stay drunk for a month on his own stock. Then he hired a sign-painter and had

him paint out the *Cantina Orteza* sign on the whitewashed adobe wall, and paint the dump's new name in big square black letters. I give you my word, it was the *Cantina Tus Besos Fueron Mios*. That only translates one way: the Saloon Thy Kisses Once Were Mine. It sounds as funny in Spanish as it does in English.

So all of us started dropping in there evenings, and sympathizing with Mike. Then we began making up stories about the machete duel Mike was going to challenge old Rubio to fight, and naturally, he became Machetero Mike. A *machetero* is a native who loves to fight at close quarters with those chopping tools. It takes plenty of something or other to pick that for your favorite amusement. More than Mike had. But the gang kept coming and kidding, and they always bought drinks, and Mike was coining money out of his lovesickness. The big fat stiff and his grief kind of helped you forget you were in Puerto Tiburon. Those days you sort of stuck close to anything that helped you forget that.

So the place was packed this night. This stoker off the *Zucurao* was drunk and ugly. Nobody knew who he was, and that didn't matter either. Barney Sweeney had got some *dinero* somewhere, and he was there, and he was drunk and ugly too. He and the stoker tangled over some fool argument. Next minute it was them all over the place. What the stoker was doing to Barney was what the meat-chopper does to what it's making into hamburgers. That was all right with us, for it was Barney's fault, and we were just as tired of Barney Sweeney as anybody ever got tired of anybody. But that happened to be the minute Hank Stone came through the door.

Now Barney Sweeney didn't mean any more to Hank Stone that minute than a mosquito means to a mule. But Hank was one of those saps born with ideas

of what's right and what's wrong, and who try to do something about it. He saw the stoker had about forty pounds on Barney, and Barney was out on his feet. He grabbed the stoker by the neck and the pants and hauled him off his meat. Naturally, the stoker didn't take it peaceable.

HANK was cold sober. Nobody in Puerto Tiburon had seen him drunk. And up to now, nobody had ever seen him fight. It was a treat. Not that he was any ring champion in disguise, though we had about everything else living in Puerto Tiburon, those days before extradition.

But Hank was big and rugged, and he had one of those serious faces that look kind of craggy, like the faces the rain and a million years wash out of rock sometimes. And he had a simple, direct sort of way of fighting. He hit 'em in the belly and he hit 'em on the chin. He stretched that stoker cold in four punches.

Then another tough baby out of the *Zucurao's* stoke-hold took up for his pal. It took Hank a little longer to lay him alongside his shipmate, but he did it. And up bobs the third candidate. This boy was tough, and he knew something about boxing, too. He opened up a fine young cut over Hank's left eye. But Hank shakes his head and bores in, and a minute later the third *Zucurao* man is listening to the birdies.

Hank Stone stands there in the middle of the floor. His feet are planted a little wide apart. His face is streaming blood like he had a red handkerchief plastered to it. His big fists are cocked and swinging just a little.

"Anybody else comin' to this party?" he says in that slow Texas drawl. But it looks like nobody wants any part of him.

"Then step up to the bar," says Hank. "I'm buying. And Mike," he says with a wave at the three on the floor, "give 'em a drink when they come to."

That was the first time any of us had ever heard him pull that line, too. But that was surprise party night, I guess. Hank Stone went along with the gang, while we all got tight as an Indian village at a *fiesta*. He turned out to be a grand guy to get tight with. All of us got to like Hank a lot, that night. Up to then he just hadn't opened up.

So that was why we all felt kind of sore, and figured Hank had handed himself a dirty deal, when we learned a few days later that Barney Sweeney had thrown his hook into Hank's shirt-tail and had gone up in back with him when he pulled out of Puerto Tiburon. Nobody ever rated congratulations for Barney's sticking to him. All you ever got out of that was sympathy.

We did some casual figuring on how long Barney would last with Hank. For we knew now we had to hand it to Hank Stone. Outside the way he could fight and hold his liquor, he had pulled something nobody else in Puerto Tiburon was man enough to try. He had quit work with the banana company, and he was prospecting for gold up in back beyond the pass in the divide of the Cordilleras, living among the Indians of the Sinagua Valley. But just because you were the first white man in history could get along with the Sinagua Indians was no sign you could get along with Barney Sweeney.

YOU had to be around Barney Sweeney awhile, to realize a white man could get along on the Banana Coast with so little pride. He had none whatever, anybody could have told you.

Not that he slouched or cringed. He was short and stocky and barrel-chested. He had a thick shock of rusty-looking hair. His big beak of a nose jutted out like his chin. His eyes were a sort of hot reddish-brown. His hands were big, and

had big gingersnap-colored freckles on them. To look at him you'd swear he could fight, but his looks were just one more Barney Sweeney lie.

Truth wasn't in him. His ideas of property rights were exactly like those of a hungry dog in a butcher-shop. On the Banana Coast those days, when about every white man drank, he stood out as the prize drunkard. He'd swallow anything he could hang a lip over, down to native *guaro*. And he couldn't hold his drinks like a white man.

He owed money to every white man he knew. It didn't embarrass him at all. He'd try to borrow a dollar from men he knew wouldn't lend him a dime if he called out thirsty to them from hell, and cold lakes were selling a dime a dozen. They couldn't insult him, and they knew it and he knew they knew it and it didn't seem to hurt his feelings.

It didn't fit, but he had a voice like playing an organ in church. Maybe that voice was why, but a good many men said he had been educated for a priest. Nobody knew. But he did have an education that was an insult to most of the old-timers on the Banana Coast, it was that good. He proved it whenever he got into an argument. But it was funny; he never would argue unless he was drinking and he never could drink without fighting, so his record was perfect. He won every argument. He lost every fight. And that used to make the other Irishmen down there sorer at him than anything else.

Nobody really knew anything about him before he came to Puerto Tiburon. But that meant nothing. Nobody asked questions much more than they used to do in Texas. You drifted in, those days. You climbed down over the side of some steamship and landed on the rickety little T-head wharf. You walked ashore and got a dirty little room at the Grand Hotel Internacional. Then you got a job with the banana company. Jobs opened up fast, what with a daily funeral at Monkey Hill.

We hadn't come yet to banana company doctors and hospitals with white tile and copper screens and laboratories and X-ray. We were old-timers and didn't know it. We'd 've laughed if anybody had told us about the newcomers. Young engineers with diplomas in their trunks. Scientific agriculturists who'd use words like "agronomy" without hesitating at all. All of 'em speaking college text-book Spanish.

Agronomy! Hell! That means the science of raising crops from the soil, and everybody knew bananas just grew. If you'd mentioned the Panama disease, everybody would 've thought you were pulling a medical joke. We didn't know bananas had a disease.

BIG Dick Corcoran, Assistant Superintendent for the banana company at Puerto Tiburon, came nearest to telling why white men went there.

"Outside a few wet-eared pups looking for something they call adventure," he said one night, "and the lads who should be thanking the saints, maybe, that this country has no extradition yet, we have two classes of white men in this God-forsaken paradise of the American tropics. The man who didn't get the woman he wanted. And the man who did—and hopped it here to get away from her."

It would 've been the signal for the big horse-laugh if anybody had said Hank Stone was on the Banana Coast because he hadn't got the woman he wanted, but it was true. Somehow you couldn't picture that craggy-faced Texan pulling the same stuff in his way that Machetero Mike pulled when he named his dump the Saloon Thy Kisses Once Were Mine. But he had.

"Back home" to Hank meant Greenville, Gregg County, Texas. Heard him speak of it once. Said they had "the

blackest land and the whitest people on God's green footstool." An old aunt had raised him. She owned considerable cotton acreage just outside town. Hank, with his size, must 've been a handy youngster around the place. His aunt had cut him in for a share of the profits. He had a saving account. Then he fell for this Greenville girl, and she turned him down cold for some fast-talking boy who got mentioned now and then in the local paper as a rising young merchant. And the girl had kind of nursed Hank along until she had the rising young merchant hooked and the engagement announced.

Hank admitted to me once he sat up all that night, thinking he was thinking. Next day he told his aunt he was taking a little trip and he'd write. Went to town, drew his savings, bought a ticket for New Orleans. Kind of rambled the waterfront there. Ships are a novelty in Greenville. Saw the old *Zucurao* unloading bananas. Bought some drinks for a talkative second mate. That's when he first heard about Puerto Tiburon. It sounded good as any place to Hank, just then. It was a long way from Greenville. And he figured if a man could raise cotton, he could raise bananas. So he stepped ashore on that little T-head wharf a few days later.

He was feeling so low in his mind that it didn't make him feel any lower to land in a town where the tide was the sewerage system and the *zopilotes* were the street cleaning department. They got buzzards in Texas, too. He got his bearings. Next morning he hit Big Dick Corcoran for a banana company job and got it. He worked for 'em two years, one job or another.

Then he quit and drew his savings again. He bought a good saddle-mule and a pack-mule and an outfit and the supplies those two years had taught him he'd need, and he rode up in back to prospect for gold.

Now gold-prospecting was no news in Puerto Tiburon. Every now and then somebody quit his banana company job and went out after gold. Almost anybody could make day-wages at it, until he got tired of being alone or sick of the sight of a pardner. Now and then somebody would make a small strike.

But they didn't head where Hank Stone headed. He rode straight up the pass in the divide of the Cordilleras, and back into the Sangre de Cristo mountains, and in among the Indians of the Sinagua Valley. When we learned that, we gave him up for lost. Old-timers didn't mess with the Sinagua Indians. They knew too much about them.

THEY were plain malignant, that tribe. Even the national government had as little to do with them as it could. The valley was so poor it produced hardly anything a national government could tax. Mainly the *politicos* let them alone.

Ever since the machete came to the tropics, the Sinagua Indians had been for it strong. It was the sort of tool they loved to use, chopping up people they didn't like, and as far as anybody seemed to know, they didn't have a friend in the world.

They had been that way always. Or at least since Hernando Cortez visited them, and that was four hundred years before, which is long enough. He came in with his fighting men in armor, and a spot priest and a flag, and told them they now belonged to the king of Spain and had to kick out their old gods and turn over all the gold they had to their new king.

They told him they had just sent all their gold to Montezuma in what became Mexico City, as tribute, and hadn't mined any more yet, and from all I've been able to learn, that was true. It didn't seem to interest Cortez at all, for he had killed Montezuma and had his gold already, and he didn't believe them anyway. So he gave the order, and his

soldiers grabbed their *cacique*, the tribal chief, and a couple of *chacs*, their priests, and roasted them to death over a slow fire to make them tell where their gold was hidden. They died without telling him anything.

That night the Sinagua Indians made an attack on the Spanish camp, and the war was on. Indian losses were terrible; weapons of wood and chipped obsidian, and quilted cotton armor against gunpowder and tempered steel; but those Sinagua Indians didn't scare. They were stupid that way. They strove earnestly to kill every Spaniard, and they did kill some. So Cortez set out deliberately to exterminate them, and he damned near did it. He killed men, women and children. He destroyed their ancient irrigation works that had held and led the waters of the Rio Sinagua as they rose and fell. In the Sinagua Valley you live with water or you don't live.

Cortez made a desert out of that valley. Then he marched away toward the coast. Three days beyond the valley's coastward opening, the Sinagua survivors made a night attack on his camp from ambush. They disappeared with three Spanish prisoners. They took them back to their valley. In the ruins of their old capital they fastened them to three big crosses they had raised in imitation of the way the little ivory figure had been fastened to the ebony cross borne by the Spanish priest. And thus fastened, they roasted them to death very slowly, the way their *cacique* and their *chacs* had been roasted, and maybe they felt better afterward.

They handed down that tale from father to son for four hundred years. Nobody will ever know just how many men with skins whiter than the Indians paid their lives as a price for Hernando Cortez' party, but it was many.

We old-timers knew them. Now and then a Sinagua Indian would come down through the pass in the divide of the Cordilleras and get a banana company job. There was plenty of ditching and clearing and plain labor on the little railroad's right of way.

We noticed such a man would stick pretty close to his tribal brothers who were working for the banana company, or if there were none, he herded by himself in a one-man huddle. Then, when he had earned money enough for what he wanted, he quit his job, got what he wanted, and disappeared up the trail over the pass in the divide. What he wanted mostly was machetes.

Now and then we'd pick up a little

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dope about them. We knew that about twice a year the Sinagua Indians began to get mad inside themselves. Then they'd begin to strop their machetes to a little more of a razor edge. Then, after a few days of going around in a black grouch, they'd get together and raid some other Indian tribe deep in the interior. After they had chopped up some people with their machetes, they seemed to feel better. They'd quiet down again for another six months.

Those were the little playmates Hank Stone picked to go among and search for gold. It's a miracle yet, just how he got away with it. The best guess is that he probably saved the life of one of them on one of the banana farms where he was time-keeper, and cashed in on that Indian's gratitude, but that's plain guesswork. Nobody ever knew. Hank never told.

He surprised us all by coming riding down the pass in the divide, all in one piece, about six months after he first rode up in back. He went in to see Big Dick Corcoran. They had a long jawbone session. Hank stocked up on more supplies at the commissary and rode up in back again. Nobody stubbed a toe running to try and join him. It was like that for a couple of years. Then the night before the big fight at Machetero Mike's, Hank rode into town again. Big Dick handed him a letter. It had been waiting for him some time. Mail ain't delivered up in the Sinagua Valley.

It was a longer time before I ever knew what was in that letter. But Hank himself let it out later, not knowing that he was tying up a couple of mighty loose ends for me. It was from Hank's aunt in Greenville, Gregg County, Texas. She wrote Hank that the girl he used to be so sweet on had been married in due course, and had waited about four years to have a baby, and when she had, she and the baby had both gone up a trail that led a lot longer away from Greenville than even the Sinagua Valley.

That made it all clear enough how come Hank fought those three men off the old *Zucurao* and got tight as a cattle-tick that night. It was about all that could take the edge off something that hurt as much as that.

But nothing could make it clear what would happen when Hank Stone rode back inland from that visit to Puerto Tiburon, with Barney Sweeney tagging along on a saddle-mule Hank had bought, leading another pack-mule loaded with more supplies that Hank had bought, too.

That just didn't make sense.

CHAPTER II

THE KINGDOM OF HELL

IT didn't make sense, either, when those stories began to filter out of the Sinagua Valley. Some of us old-timers had friends among the Indians. They trusted us. One would drop a couple of words now and then. Saturday nights, when the gang would have plenty time on their hands, there'd be times when you'd sit back and swap what you'd heard. And this business up in the Sinagua Valley began to take shape like one of them jig-saw puzzles.

It wasn't news of any big gold strike, Hank and Barney hadn't stumbled into any buried treasure in any Mayan buried temple city, either. It was a lot stranger than that.

The nearest I could figure it out, Barney Sweeney had found his mission in life. It all sounded like Hank Stone had become a sort of reigning prince up there in the Sinagua Valley, and Barney Sweeney had made himself a sort of prime minister to him. Kind of a press agent, too. No, it just didn't make sense.

About once every six months the two of 'em came riding down the pass in the divide, and spent a few days in Puerto Tiburon. Barney always got drunk

within two hours after he hit town. Then, regular as clockwork, he always got into an argument and the argument ended in a fight, and he always got licked. That was, unless Hank was riding herd on him. Hank seemed to be the only man in the world could handle him without knocking him out from under his hat. And when Hank was there, nobody wanted to tangle with Barney; not after that night at Machetero Mike's.

Barney wasn't trying to borrow any money any more, either. Not that he did any paying back on those old touches he called loans. That would 've been expecting too much, I guess.

It got to be a sort of semi-annual routine. They'd come riding in, Barney would slip out of Hank's sight, Hank would go chin with Big Dick Corcoran awhile, then he'd stock up on those two pack-mule loads of supplies, then he'd round up Barney, and pretty soon they'd be riding back up the pass in the divide.

And the stories kept filtering out of the Sinagua Valley, bit by little bit.

It was crazy as hell, that picture that was taking shape in my mind. I guess one thing that made it look crazier was the pet ant-eater Hank had picked up somewhere. He came riding into Puerto Tiburon with it, one of those trips. It was cuddled up in the crook of his left arm like a black, fuzzy ball. He'd talk to it like some men talk to a pet dog—a hell of a lot more than he talked with Barney Sweeney. More than he talked to most humans, for that matter. Carried it in the crook of his arm when he walked around Puerto Tiburon. It would scout around the floor when he sat down to take a drink or eat a meal, lapping up crumbs or them big tropic ants or cockroaches, or whatever it could find.

Cortez

You see some strange partnerships and combinations in the tropics, but Hank Stone, that pet ant-eater, and Barney Sweeney made the strangest I ever saw. And this thing kept up year after year. Four or five years of it. The newcomers who drifted into Puerto Tiburon had begun calling Hank Stone a mining engineer, instead of a tropical prospector. He was a mining engineer just about as much as I'm a speckled-nosed Chinese midwife.

Hank never had been talkative. He was getting damn near dumb, now. Polite enough. Friendly in a quiet way. Admitted he was making something better'n day wages up there. Chuckled once when I told him it looked to me like he'd found more ways of not finding gold than any other prospector in human history. But there was a queer, faraway look in his eyes, and he always left your conversation hanging up in the air.

And somehow it all fitted with the crazy picture of Hank Stone ruling in the Sinagua Valley—a picture that was getting clear enough in my mind now so I began to believe it was true.

I'D never been up there yet. But my Indian friends had made it live for me. What little I got out of Hank filled in the gaps.

Way up in back it was. Ringed by high mountains that looked like the edge of a big saw held against the sky. Sun like the edge of a knife in your eyeballs in daytime, and hotter than hell's own deck-plates. Colder than jet-black hell at night; two-blanket and three-blanket cold. Wriggling down through the middle of it, the bed of the Sinagua River, and part of the year you could fry eggs on the stones in the river bed any day around noon. Kind of a sprawled-out pueblo of whitewashed adobe, where the old capital stood that Cortez razed. Silent, sullen Indians, moving about their business on leather sandals, wearing them wide Indian pants that stop halfway between the knee and ankle, and Indian shirts and an Indian-woven *serape* slung over a shoulder, and big *sombreros*, and every mother's son of 'em with a razor-edged machete and itching for a chance to use it.

Women on their knees, doing the eternal family washing. Sleepy, fat old village priest in a little 'dobe church, where the Indians bought a candle of the old woman on the steps, lighted it, and knelt in front of it out in the open plaza, and prayed to the ancient gods of the Quiche for permission to enter the church of the God of the Spaniards. Then they'd buy another candle for each of their dead relatives they had known in life, and go in and light 'em and stand 'em in their own grease on the stone-flagged floor, in a semi-circle, and squat behind those candles and talk to their dead.

And night after night, after prospecting up and down the valley and in the *arroyos hondos* that opened out of it, Hank Stone comin' back to this on his mule, with that damned pet ant-eater curled up in the crook of his elbow.

It was downright spooky, somehow.

Barney Sweeney wasn't doing any prospecting. He had constituted himself prime minister and press-agent and treasurer to Prince Hank, and that damned fool actually was letting him take care of what gold he did dig up and pan out. That was the craziest thing of all. Trusting Barney Sweeney with your money!

Some ways, Barney Sweeney was a crazier part of that picture than Hank Stone. Day by day, it seems, Barney would be circulating the Sinagua Valley, talking to the Indians like the Irish politician he was, singing the praises of Prince Hank. He seemed to be getting the greatest kick in his life out of building up that Texas farm-boy into an Indian legend of all the three wise men walking in one pair of pants.

And Hank Stone was growing to fit that legend.

He had begun to know more about the Sinagua Valley than the Sinagua Indians themselves. He had learned where the old irrigation ditches ran. He had learned the rules of the old days about water rights. They began to come to him to settle disputes. He'd sit patiently, listening to them, with his pet ant-eater cuddled in the crook of his elbow, and never say a word until they had talked themselves out. Then he'd sit silent awhile thinking. Then in a loud voice he would begin: "This is right—" and he would render his verdict. And, by the Lord, they were taking it like Moses took the Ten Commandments!

THE day one of our Indians told me how Hank had sat for days in the semi-circle of an Indian audience and had discussed the nature of religion with the village priest, and everybody went home happy at the end, I knew Hank was a great man or Barney was a great politician, or both. I kind of think now it was both.

They showed sense, too. When the madness came upon the Sinagua Indians about twice a year, and they stropped their machetes and began to figure out a raid against some neighboring tribe, or some faction of their own, for a little chopping party, Barney and Hank were able to figure out just about how long it would last. That was when they headed for Puerto Tiburon and renewed their supplies. And they timed their return so they hit the Sinagua Valley just about when everybody had got a few chops at somebody he didn't like, and was feeling better, but there were a lot of loose ends to be tide up and a peace to be patched.

That was where Prince Hank shone. Barney would circulate around, easy-like, and presently he would arrange for a peace council in the big main room of the *Jefatura.* Then the leaders of the two sides would come and explain it all to Hank. And Hank would sit and listen for days.

And when they had talked themselves out, Hank ran true to form. He'd sit a long while in silence, his head in his hand, his elbow on his knee, thinking. Then he'd slap his thigh and say: "This is right—" in a loud voice, and he would give the peace terms.

They would be common sense, that's all. And they came to men who'd had their little fighting drunk and wanted to wait six months for another, and wanted to save their faces, too.

So they'd think awhile, not to appear too eager. Then the leaders of the different sides would get up and embrace, and everybody would cheer, and they'd put on a special *fiesta* to celebrate the new peace. Everybody would get drunk on *guaro* that night, and sometimes in the fight that followed the drinking there'd be more people chopped up with machetes than there had been in the war. But that was all right with everybody. A little social machete chopping at a party was something everybody up there understood. It had no political significance at all.

Four or five years of that—maybe six, I ain't sure. But it looked by then like Hank Stone was set to spend his life looking for the big gold strike he'd never find, and being a local prince with Barney his treasurer, and the Lord knows there'd never be any nutriment for anybody but Barney Sweeney when Barney handled the cash.

That man had no pride whatever, anybody in Puerto Tiburon could tell you. He'd end by vanishing between sunset and sunrise, and leave poor old Hank Stone flat broke and holding the bag, we all knew. Just the minute that Irish beachcomber got bored with the game he was playing—

We tried to tell Hank about it, one time in Puerto Tiburon. He just grinned at us.

Then two unexpected wallops hit the scenery. One was a girl. The other was the Panama disease.

The girl hit first.

WE got her story, bit by bit, the way everything drifted down to Puerto Tiburon sooner or later. A white girl in the Sinagua Valley didn't make sense, either, but there she was. She hadn't come in through Puerto Tiburon. She'd come down the mountain trails out of Mexico, on an expedition. In Ciudad San Tiburcio, the capital, she had been presented to *El Presidente,* and he had seen her credentials and had sent out a blanket order to the *jefe politico* and the *jefe militar* of every state in the republic to give her what she asked for. She stocked up on supplies again, and took more mountain trails to the Sinagua Valley.

She was Dr. Marguerite Vallon, archeologist, anthropologist, paleontologist, which is a hell of a mouthful for a girl to be. She had stuided at Harvard and the Sorbonne and Heidelberg, and may-

be somewhere else, but I forget. She was pushing back the curtain that shrouded the prehistoric history of the Maya race and its Quiche cousins for another thousand years or so, according to the story I read in *El Heraldo* when a copy came down from San Tiburcio. And allowing for a native editor's enthusiasm for blondes, I gathered that she wouldn't have to ask too many odds in Hollywood, at that.

There she was, settled down in the chief pueblo of the Sinagua Indians alongside Hank Stone and Barney Sweeney, and using it as a base for her explorations among the ruined temple cities of that section.

We old-timers didn't run a temperature any more when we stumbled into one of those ruined temple cities. You couldn't go on a hunting trip in a jungle without stubbing your toe on one. But if I didn't get excited over rolling back the curtains of Quiche history another thousand years or so, I did get plenty kick figuring out what might happen with the combination of a girl and Hank Stone, with Barney Sweeney around, up in the Sinagua Valley. It dawned on me that Hank hadn't seen a white woman in years, except when he came down to Puerto Tiburon, where all the white women in sight had claims staked out all over them.

Then I found I didn't have time to figure out anything outside my own job with the banana company. For the Panama disease hit us and that was plain hell.

That disease always did exist in the jungle, we found out. It was a kind of slow rot that worked up inside the main stalk of the banana plant, and the plant just lay over like a candle-wick with no candle to hold it up, and it wasn't any more use to itself or anybody else. All of a sudden we discovered that disease in thousands of hectares of our best banana farms.

You can picture what that meant to the big boys in the main office back home. Scientific sharks began to pour into Puerto Tiburon about as fast as bananas used to pour out of it. Entomologists and agronomists and plant biologists and cases of laboratory equipment and what have you. They used big words, but the words weren't big enough to hold much hope for the stockholders back home, and there weren't any dividends in 'em.

I thought Big Dick Corcoran would go crazy. He's a production man, first, last and all time. He was superintendent now. We never had a better one.

When that man started working on a problem, he never ended standing in a corner wringing his hands and talking to himself. He didn't this time, either. He gave the experts their inning. Then he got the big boss science shark the company sent down and backed him in a corner. Before Big Dick let him out, the professor admitted that the best bet in sight was to abandon cultivation for awhile on the farms infected with the Panama disease and start growing bananas farther inland, away from those coastal jungles.

That was all Big Dick needed to know. His brain began to spin like a dynamo right then. That night a telegram in code brought the company's confidential man in Ciudad San Tiburcio, the capital, hurrying down to Puerto Tiburon on the next train.

For the answer was the Sinagua Valley. Tucked away in the back of his head Big Dick knew about those old irrigation works up there. He knew that the company had a concession on the valley. It had never used it, because it never needed to. And what was more, he remembered that the banana outfit that hated our guts had a concession for the Sinagua Valley, too. It was older than ours. It had been given by a president who had been run out of the coun-

try long since, and had died in Paris of too many drinks and too many girls. But when he came to remember it, Big Dick remembered that it had never been legally annulled. They did things that way on the Banana Coast those days.

THREE days after he left Puerto Tiburon, our confidential man came scurrying back from the capital. He had learned what Big Dick needed to know. The dear old competition was rottener with Panama disease than we were, and they had somebody in their outfit who used his head for thinking, too. They were making passes at their pet *politicos* for the Sinagua Valley, and they were ready to spend money to get it. They thought they saw their chance to put us on the ropes.

If there was any one thing Big Dick Corcoran had learned on the Banana Coast, it was that possession is all ten points of the law, providing you can hold on. He got going right away.

That was one show where I was behind the scenes. Big Dick hauled me off the work I was doing and made a sort of *ayudo de campo* out of me. Wires began to get pulled. Natives began to pay Big Dick visits at his house in the dark of the night. They ranged from men with old Castilian names to Indians who still made their prayers and begged pardon of some Quiche god before they cut down a tree. Money was slipped to men who'd kill their own uncles for five pesos. Some funny shipments came into port by night, in dirty little coasting schooners. The cases were stored in old Guzman Melgado's two-by-four warehouse down by the waterfront. They were marked "Agricultural Implements." They were hardware, all right. Nobody would carry powder-puffs to the kind of a party that was cooking in the Sinagua Valley.

In the middle of it all, I woke up to the fact that three white folks were up in the Sinagua Valley—and I liked one of 'em and the second was a woman. All hell was going to pop up that way, and I got worried about Hank Stone and this girl explorer. Nobody ever worried about Barney Sweeney. But he was a white man, at that.

So I spoke to Big Dick about it.

"Glad you spoke of it," he said. "I'll send up an Indian runner with a message to Hank. The whole three of 'em had better hit the trail for the port."

The hell of it was, we found out a long time after, that Indian runner had a little blood feud on, and he stopped his enemy's machete before he got half way up through the foothills. He stopped it where his neck joined his shoulder. He was a good runner, but he wasn't delivering any message after that, anywhere on this earth.

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CHAPTER III

LAST STAND

BIG DICK CORCORAN had done what he had to do in Puerto Tiburon. There was nothing else to do now about the Sinagua Valley but wait for news. We went back to routine. There's always plenty of that on the Banana Coast. Sort of a peaceful interlude.

That's how come I was riding up the line to our Olancho farm. It was the last one we had in cultivation in from the coast up toward the foothills. It hadn't been hit by the Panama disease yet, so it was important. I was making time, that trip, in the division superintendent's private car. That sounds more important than it looked. It was an old Stanley Steamer touring car, with a Ford motor under the hood. It operated by brass door-knobs on the dashboard. It had four flanged wheels and a Carib driver and it ran on a standard-gauge railroad track like nobody's business. And I was cussing a timekeeper named Tracy all the way.

He was a fine young American, this Tracy, at that. He just hadn't got used to the tropics yet. Next to the Olancho farm was an independent banana grower with another proud Castilian name and more Indian blood in him than he would ever admit. He was useful to us. We bought a lot of bananas from independents when we had blowdown or more steamship space to fill than our division could supply. They were handy, too, to prove to trust-busting congressmen and senators back home we weren't any iron-clad monopoly. But Tracy had uncovered a fine little arrangement this independent had with one of our boss Indians. It accounted for a lot of missing supplies and equipment that had been an Olancho farm mystery.

The only trouble was that Tracy didn't use Castilian courtesy or tact or diplomacy about it. Once he had the proof, he called this *hidalgo* a damned thief where several other people heard the performance. And down in Puerto Tiburon we got the tip by jungle telegraph that the independent *hidalgo* had told some of his friends he was going to kill Tracy.

We didn't want to lose Tracy and we didn't want to lose this independent. So Big Dick sent me busting up there to straighten it out, and we'd transfer Tracy to another division if we had to and let the independent *hidalgo* think we'd fired him.

I left the private car on the Y at Olancho junction, for it wouldn't run on the narrow-gauge track on which the mule cars take the bananas out to the main line. I got a saddle-mule in the junction corral, and started up the trail. It was the main trail that led through the foothills up to the pass in the divide. The side trail to the farm buildings branched off it about three miles above the junction.

Just before I got to where the side trail opened off the main trail, I discovered I hadn't got there quick enough. There, right in the middle of the main trail, the *zopilotes* were holding a convention over something. When I drove those damned buzzards away, I discovered by the breeches and boots it was what was left of Tracy. He had died quick and painless, anyway. Two charges of buckshot had caught him between the shoulder-blades and ripped his spine in two. He never knew what hit him.

I sent for some blankets. Just as we got everything cleaned up and and what was left of poor Tracy on its way back to a decent funeral, I heard voices up the trail, and here around the bend come two riders. In front, on a saddle-mule, is Dr. Marguerite Vallon, riding astride. Back of her on his saddle-mule rides Hank Stone, and that damned pet ant-eater of his is cuddled in the crook of

his arm. I supposed, of course, they'd got the message we sent.

"Hullo," I said. "Glad you got out. Where's Barney Sweeney?"

And I'm damned if he didn't begin to cry.

I'd be willing to make a bet those were the first tears shed over Barney Sweeney since his mother died.

"LISTEN," I said, "don't let's talk about it now. Come along with me. I've got Big Dick's private car down at the junction. We'll leave your mules at the junction corral and I'll run you down to Puerto Tiburon fast. You both look like you need what we've got down there."

But you might just as well ask a river to run uphill as ask them not to talk about Barney Sweeney. All the way down to the junction, all the way down to Puerto Tiburon, they took turns talking. Damned if it didn't sound like the way we used to talk about the Father of his Country when I was in school back home on Washington's Birthday.

I got the picture at last. I had to believe it whether it made sense or not.

From the minute that girl hit the Sinagua Valley, both Hank and Barney had sort of let their own affairs slide. She took turns with 'em. Hank would show her the old ruins he'd stumbled into while he was prospecting around. Barney would take her around to talk with the *caciques* of the different villages. She was getting some swell stuff no worker in what they call Middle American research ever got before. And the climax of it was when Hank, after she'd been with them some months, showed her something he had found.

He'd been prospecting up on one of the mountains that ringed the valley, a little while before she came, he explained to her, and he found this old mound on a sort of shelf pretty high up. Some trace of masonry showed where some earth had slidden away. Normally he didn't mess with Maya ruins, for he knew the Indians were funny about that, sometimes. But he was alone, and he began to wonder just why the Indians had built that sort of a mound away up there so long ago. So he took a few swipes with his pick and pried with his crowbar, and the crowbar slipped through a crack and disappeared inside.

Hank needed that crowbar, so he went to work in earnest with his pick. And after some work he had an opening into some sort of a chamber. It had that funny Indian arch for the roof, the walls kind of leaning toward each other at the top. The Maya never mastered the true arch. And in the middle of the floor rose a big stone slab, and on it was what was left of a skeleton, and Hank knew he was in an oldtime tomb. But he noticed a kind of a funny soft leather pouch resting on the skeleton's breastbone and ribs.

He opened it up. Inside was one of those big rolls of Maya picture-writing. Nothing but the dry air had kept it up there hundreds and hundreds of years without rotting.

Maybe you've seen 'em in museums. Funny pictures of old Maya gods and fighting men and their women, done in red and blue and black, doing things you can understand sometimes, and things you can't understand sometimes, and things you don't talk about in mixed company any time.

That was why Hank hadn't mentioned it before, it seems. He figured some of those pictures just naturally weren't proper to show a lady. But Dr. Vallon had been describing what she called the Codex Dresden she had seen in Europe, and Hank had said: "Why, I've got one of those things myself."

She went plumb crazy when she saw it, Hank said. And when he told me that, she sort of smiled, and said: "You'll be surprised if I ever show you some

other folks who're going crazy when they see it."

Hank had offered to give it to her. But she had told him she couldn't take it as a gift. There'd be no telling what some museum would pay for it in Europe or the United States. She just asked him one favor. Could it be known as the Codex Vallon, after it was sold and he got the money? It would be her monument in her work forever. Or would he want it to be known as the Codex Stone?

And Hank had said: "Listen, I tried to give it to you. Did you think I was going to argue about what you call it? You go ahead and sell it to any kind of museum you want, and we'll split the price, and you call it anything seems fitting to you except the Codex Stone."

So they let it go at that, and the girl never let that roll of Maya picture writing out of her sight or touch, day or night. She stayed in the pueblo for weeks, studying it. And it had a funny effect on Barney Sweeney.

Hank Stone went back to his prospecting while she was staying in, and Barney kept hanging around. He began to explain to her in greater detail just how he had built up Prince Hank into a reigning monarch in the Sinagua Valley, so to speak, and knowing Barney as I did, it was plain as the nose on your face that he was jealous of Hank's being such a great figure in the girl's eyes, though neither of those two sapheads could see it. Barney was itching for some chance to come that would show him as important in the Sinagua Valley as Hank looked to this beautiful girl.

AND all this time, the three of them so deep in their personal affairs they didn't see what was happening around around them. It wasn't the usual time for the Sinagua Indians to go on the warpath. They hadn't got any message from Big Dick Corcoran. They didn't know about the Panama disease or what had been started in Puerto Tiburon and Ciudad San Tiburcio.

So it caught 'em a mile off first base, that morning, when they heard the voices turned into the sound a mob makes when it is getting ready to use machetes down there.

Dr. Vallon was the first to notice it. She went to the door and looked down toward the plaza.

"What's the excitement?" she asked them.

Both Hank and Barney rose and went to the door and then they looked at each other. They knew the madness had come on the Sinagua Indians again, and it wasn't the time for it, any more than it would be time for snow in July back home.

That was when Barney Sweeney made his great play.

"I never heard him speak up like that before," said Hank Stone. "Quick and sharp. I'll hear his voice as long as I live. He said: 'Here! This is bad. But I can handle it. You can't, Hank. Your job is after they've finished fighting. I don't know what the hell started 'em off now, but they're started. You've got to get this girl out of here, Hank. While this blood-drunk is on 'em, they'll chop up anybody in the world but me.'

"He had been pulling up his shirt as he talked," Hank went on. "He unstrapped a money belt I never knew he wore. He handed it to me. He said: 'Strap it on, fast.' I was sort of dazed. I did like he said. Then he said: 'Get out in back and saddle up the two best mules we've got, and get the hell out of here. Spur the heart out of 'em until you're over the pass in the divide. Kill 'em, if they drop dead, far enough away from here. You'll get word from me in Puerto Tiburon when it's safe to come back.'

"I stood there feeling like a fool," says Hank. "I started to say: 'I'm damned if I'm leaving you here, Barney,' but he yells at me like a madman, and I take orders like a house-boy. I run out and

saddle the two mules and get Dr. Vallon on hers, and we're riding hell-for-leather up the street toward the trail for the pass in the divide before I see that somewhere I picked up this pet ant-eater, and Dr. Vallon is clutching that old roll of picture-writing she calls the Codex Vallon."

Then when he tells what happened next, he breaks down and cries, and the girl tries to help him out and she breaks down and cries, and I'm damned if I don't feel funny in my throat myself.

It amounts to this: The trail leads up from the street, higher than the town. They look over their shoulders as they ride. They see Barney Sweeney with his shoulders thrown back, marching down the street like a soldier, and once he wheels and catches a glimpse of them, and he waves once.

Then he swings around and marches straight at that mob of bloodthirsty Sinagua Indians down in the plaza.

They seem to kind of surge forward toward him. He keeps on marching straight at them, and he raises his right arm high. It's too distant for the girl and Hank to hear voices, but they figure that he must be calling out commands to those crazy Indians in that voice of his that was like an organ playing in church.

Then they saw the mob roll completely over Barney Sweeney, like water rolling over a stump. They could catch a glint here and there in the sunlight as those razor-edged big blades began to rise and fall.

"Ride like hell," Hank tells the girl. They rode like hell up the trail to the pass in the divide.

"He believed he could handle 'em," said Hank. "He believed it enough to walk into those machetes bare-handed. You used to tell me that Barney Sweeney didn't have a decent white man's pride. By God, I'd like to have you show me any man in the world with more pride than that!"

WE'RE in Puerto Tiburon by then. I take them straight to Big Dick Corcoran's house. His native house-keeper takes the girl in hand, and I take Hank, and we get them cleaned up while some hot coffee is being made, and the boss laces it strong as horseradish with brandy and they drink it while a hot meal is cooking. The damned pet ant-eater scouts around the floor under the table nibbling up crumbs of toast.

Then when they're fed, the boss speaks up.

"The first thing you're going to do now," he says, "is sleep about twelve hours."

Big Dick and I sat there, kind of thinking, while Hank and the girl go hit the hay in the guest-rooms. But all of a sudden, there was Hank in Big Dick's bathrobe, saying: "Come in here a minute, you two." We went into the bedroom. There on the table by the bed was Barney Sweeney's old money-belt. Beside it was a pile of American currency, folded lengthwise.

"That's what he handed me when we walked out to die," says Hank. "I just thought about it when I undressed. Opened it up. All there is in it is eighteen thousand dollars!"

"Well," says Big Dick, "it looks to me like it is your eighteen thousand dollars, Hank. You two were partners, weren't you?"

"Reckon so," said Hank. "Never had any idea we had that much. Got about six thousand here on deposit at Puerto Tiburon, like you know, Dick. Barney always handled the money while I did the digging. He had a fine head for figures, but he couldn't prospect for shucks."

Big Dick and I took one look at each other. We didn't say a word. We just tiptoed out of there.

Back in the living room, I say: "Boss, I feel like I want a drink." We each pour one.

"Well?" I said, when we each lit a *puro* and sat down and looked at each other. "What was it? You know and I know Barney Sweeney, rest his soul, was holding that out on Hank. What was it? Was he jealous of Hank's stand-in with the girl, after she swallowed the build-up he'd made for Hank in the valley? Was he trying to make a grandstand play that backfired on him? Did he really believe he could handle those Indians during their blood-drunk?"

Big Dick Corcoran grins kind of a slow, easy grin.

"Answerin' your last question first, you damned old cynic," he says, "Hank'll probably figure out presently that Barney was planning a birthday-party surprise for him. Which you and I think he was, but not the kind Hank will figure out. As for all the rest, the answer is there's got to be Somebody up above to understand why His creatures on His earth do what they do, because I'm damned if anybody else ever can."

Which is as near as I ever heard Big Dick Corcoran come to talking religion. He's a banana production man first, last and all the time. There's damned little religion in that.

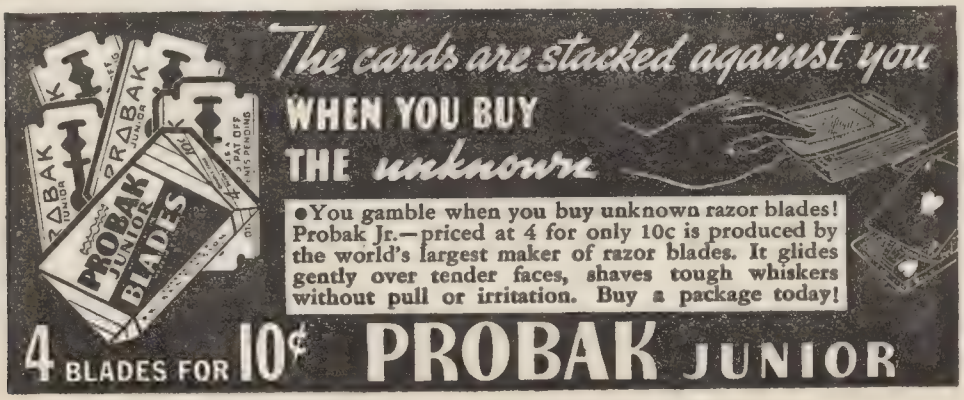
MAYBE you've seen the Sinagua Valley since those days. It produces large crops of bananas absolutely free from the Panama disease. Big Dick Corcoran is kind of proud of it. And there's a garrison of soldiers of the republic with machine guns and automatic rifles, and even a Sinagua Indian when he begins to brood twice a year can understand that a machete is no good against them.

Only a very few people know Hank Stone as Hank Stone today. He is Henry Barton Stone, and he rules in the Sinagua Valley like a king. The directors' wives are quite proud to meet his wife. Her name is in a lot of scientific magazines in connection with Middle American research. She goes to congresses in London and Paris and Berlin and New York, and old scientists make a lot of fuss over her, for she was Dr. Marguerite Vallon, who discovered the Codex Vallon that shoved back the mystery shrouding Maya history another thousand years or so.

But her husband calls her "Maggie" and she loves it.

And once a year they always come to Puerto Tiburon, and they place flowers on a monument in the church yard. Carved on it is Barney Sweeney's name, and that line about greater love hath no man than that he will lay down his life for his friend.

But I'd give a hell of a lot to know just what was the last entry the Recording Angel put on the page he kept for Barney Sweeney.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TRADITIONS OF THE DEEPWATERMEN

by WINDAS

● WHEN MY SHIP COMES IN ●

When merchant adventurers went to the money-lenders for gold to outfit their fleets, unable to state an exact date on which to repay loans, they signed documents in which they promised payment "When my ship comes in."

● KEEP YOUR SHIRT ON ●

This slang term, meaning "Don't get fighting mad" borrows its thought from the word "Berserk," which literally means "Bare of serk (shirt)." When Norse sailors went "Berserk" they tore off their shirts of mail, and fought naked to the waist.

● ON THE BEACH ●

This term has nothing in common with the word "Beachcomber." It is merely a sailorman's way of saying he is out of a job.

● SEA-LAWYER ●

Not one of the legal fraternity by any means; but a surly argumentative fellow; one who finds fault with everything and everybody aboard.

"If he comes after us—we'll fight!"

NINE PICKED MEN

By GEORGES SURDEZ

(second of four parts)

Begin Here

SOME men join the Legion to carve out careers as fighting men. Others join to fight and forget the past.

"Chesty" Maddock was of the latter type. Former football hero, he had seen his career blasted by scandal and tragedy. Now, unknown, one of a recruit detachment at Sidi-bel-Abbès, he was learning through bitter experience that there are easier paths to forgetfulness than the iron fist of the Legion.

From the first, he was marked for special attention. Detesch, the room corporal at barracks, had singled him out for a target, and Maddock was not the type who would take injustice without fighting back. The feud, smoldering for days, broke into open warfare when he challenged the corporal to a fight—and to his amazement, was roundly whipped by a man two-thirds his size!

Of the other recruits, Matloka alone attracted Brandon's interest. He knew weapons, had soldiered before, evidently, but not as a private. But he, like the others, was dumb concerning his past.

With the second half of his enlistment money, Brandon decided to celebrate in town. The party was at its height when Corporal Detesch strode in. The corporal ordered Maddock to drink with him. Chesty refused, and still smarting from his former whipping, determined to avenge it on the spot.

It was not a pretty fight. This time

wary of Legion fighting tricks, Maddock had cut the corporal's face to ribbons when a patrol broke in, headed by Sergeant Kolb, another of his barracks enemies. The sergeant ordered his men to seize Brandon.

Brandon broke through them, knocked the sergeant aside, and strode back to barracks unmolested. A few minutes later, he saluted the sergeant at the gate.

"Put me in the prison," he said. "I'm under arrest."

CHAPTER IV

"CAFARD"

BRANDON was permitted to simmer in his own thoughts for three days. He was not allowed out of his cell, even for exercise. One of the sentries who consented to converse with him was far from encouraging.

"Oh, they'll run the charges together, so don't worry. I don't think they'll give you much more than five years. That means seven, of course, because the penitentiary don't let you go without an extra bit. Then you can come back here to finish your enlistment. All in all, I don't think you're stuck for more than ten or twelve years."

Brandon worried and lost weight. At last, on the fourth day, he was taken before a young captain, a short, vivacious Frenchman who reminded the American of a cartoon character in uniform, because of his quick gestures and dapper dress. He did not seem ill-disposed toward the prisoner, and gave him permission to sit down, to smoke.

"Thank you, Captain. I'll stand."

"You may speak to me in English," the officer resumed. "I speak it only with difficulty now. But, save for slang, I understand it. You see, I was attached to one of your divisions for liasion duty, during the War. I like Americans much."

He explained to Brandon the charges against him—a formidable array. Striking a corporal, resisting arrest, striking a sergeant who was on duty. These major accusations split into lesser ones—as the French Army expresses it, they had pups: Insubordination, blows and cuts on Legionnaires carrying out orders, loss of his képi—torn garments. There was a complaint against him made by the civil authorities for nocturnal disorderliness and pilfering, the last for running out of a licensed café without paying the bill.

Brandon told his side of the story. He had lost his head because he feared that the patrolmen would avenge the corporal then and there. He denied having struck the sergeant. He had shoved him aside, that was all, with his shoulder. He illustrated how he had done it, without being aware of it. The officer smiled faintly.

"Ah, yes, quite! Football. I have seen that game, you know. A murderous sport. Late in 1917, near Brest, I saw a team composed of sailors—" He realized that this was no time for personal memories, gestured vaguely. "In other words, all that you can submit as extenuating circumstances are partial drunkenness, which is a doubtful excuse, vague fears and some quibbling as to how and with what part of your body you knocked down the sergeant. That's meager, most meager! Why didn't you yield to arrest quietly?"

"The sergeant ordered his men to catch me, and I got scared they'd give me the works, mishandle me, Captain. See, all they knew was that I had struck a corporal, and—"

The captain looked up sharply.

"You mean that the sergeant did not notify you directly that he was arresting you, as provided by regulations?"

"No, Captain." Brandon saw a truthful opening at last. "He never asked me to give up. He just told his men to nab me. His exact words were: *'C'est bon, Légionnaires, prenez-le!'* "

"An important point. Of course, you

knew he was acting in his official capacity, but technically, he should have notified you. If he admits what you say, it will help. Also, the meeting with the corporal, according to you, was a return fight rather than an assault. That will have to be proved. You may leave."

Brandon moistened his lips before speaking.

"May I ask you a question, Captain? Thanks. With things as they are, what will I get for punishment?"

The Captain consulted his notes, drummed with his fingers: "If it comes before a court-martial, and your explanations are believed, proved, I should say somewhere around eighteen months. If you face a disciplinary council, you may go into the disciplinary company for nine months minimum, depending on your behavior. I understand that you have funds to call off the civilians."

The officer rose, as he saw the alteration of Brandon's features. And he surprised the private by offering his hand. "If you can think of anything new, ask to see me. I'm Captain Guayon. Meanwhile, remember that a real Legionnaire never despairs."

Brandon was marched back to his cell.

He knew one thing—that he would be almost thirty, at best, when he emerged from the Legion and its entanglements! If only he had had to deal solely with officers! They all appeared friendly, indulgent. In all justice, he might have thought even further—that they could be so because the sergeants took care of the dirty work of maintaining strict discipline!

Pending trial, he was attached to a labor gang from the prison, labored with pick and shovel. But his palms did not blister more than his soul during the tedious evenings, the endless nights when even extreme physical fatigue could not bring sound sleep.

He fought against a temptation to inform his family, to obtain outside help, somewhere, somehow. But he would not play the repentant wastrel. He detested the Legion, but he had learned one of its lessons: When one has poured the wine, one must drink it!

MEANWHILE, Guayon was busy. He had a number of American friends from his war days, exchanged letters with them, and rightly or wrongly, imagined that he understood Americans. He sympathized with Brandon the more because he was himself a temporary Legionnaire, serving his tour of colonial duty in the Corps. So that if he bore the grenade badges, he retained something of an outsider's viewpoint.

He decided to prevent a court-martial or an officers' court. He called upon the regimental commander, a short, broad-shouldered, lean gentleman with a fierce hook-nose and a full beard. He explained the case, announced that he had questioned the witnesses. The colonel looked at him with a quizzical, humorous expression.

"I'll listen to them, yes," he agreed.

Corporal Detesch entered first, saluted, snapped to attention, his face red, his eyes radiating respect, devotion, almost adoration. Captain Guayon had coached him, and the corporal, with discolorations still plain around his eyes, spoke his piece. He agreed that Legionnaire Brandon might have believed another fight was starting, and said that the colonel must understand that both had had a couple of drinks.

"Quite, Corporal." The regimental commander nodded. "It is your opinion that he did not strike you as a *corporal* but as an *individual*?"

"That's it, Colonel." Detesch, anxious to please Captain Guayon, and honestly sorry for Brandon, sought to be helpful. "I think he likes corporals a whole lot, as a matter of fact."

The colonel repressed a laugh, dismissed Detesch. But his good humor increased when Sergeant Kolb entered next, literally crashing to attention. The non-com related that he had been shoved

hard, but not punched, that the arrest had degenerated into a sort of a game. That perhaps he had omitted to inform Brandon he was under arrest. That no one in the patrol had been hurt seriously. That Legionnaire Brandon was a good soldier, a bit sulky, somewhat fresh, but a good, clean soldier.

When he had left the colonel addressed Guayon.

"You wish me to be soft with that American of yours, eh? You coached those witnesses well; you'll make a Legionnaire yet. You connive like one! All right, regimental sanction. Ninety days in prison."

"Make it sixty, *mon colonel*," the captain pleaded. The division general doesn't like Legionnaires too much, and will double it anyway as a matter of principle."

"Sixty it is, then."

Sixty days!

Brandon could have laughed with relief when he heard that. He had expected a sentence of several years, and it turned out to be two months. Of course, by this time, he was aware that prison time did not count, and that he would have to serve those two months in addition to his enlistment. But why worry over two months, when it might have been sixty months?

He was almost joyous when he boarded a train with thirty-nine other prisoners, under armed guard. Progress was slow, and they thumped over the tracks all of one day and part of the evening. Then the freight car in which they rode was shunted on a siding. The occupants huddled together on the straw, slept until morning. At dawn they were ordered from the car, lined up, answered the roll call.

An old sergeant, who wore an old-fashioned, two-pointed beard such as Brandon had seen on photographs, took charge of them. He looked at least sixty. The detachment formed groups and marched.

"Where are we going?" Brandon asked. He had seen the station sign-board from a distance, and thought he had read *Crampel.*

"To the quarries," a companion explained.

Brandon felt for the first time that he was in Africa. There was still much green, many trees, but the villages seemed different, the proportion of natives larger. They appeared less citified, darker, larger, somehow wilder. By noon, the detachment reached the quarries, a gash in a brownish hill. The prisoners were herded into plank barracks, grayish, long shacks of weathered boards with sun-blistered tar roofs.

And his new existence started. He worked part of the day, slept part of the day and all night. The food was rather better than at Bel-Abbès, more varied, for occasionally there was roast lamb with *couscous,* the ground meal of the natives. Very often the wine quota was tripled. Brandon never understood whether he was working for the Legion, for the government, or for a private firm. There was a complicated arrangement of contracts and compensations.

Although it was against regulations, the veteran sergeant allowed the prisoners to go to spend a few hours in the nearest village, in groups of three or four, guarded by a brace of soldiers. As long as a man worked hard and was quiet, everything went well with him. But repression was instantaneous and merciless. Loafing, quarreling while on the job, were not tolerated.

BRANDON was on the *Decauville* for a couple of weeks —that is, he shoved a small wagon along a narrow track. Then he became a loader and his wine ration was doubled. After four weeks he was allowed to graduate to pick and shovel work, to help in the excavating. And by that time he was getting a whole quart of red wine a day. He had grown to like it, to need it.

His money had gone to compensate

the civilians. He could only afford two cigarettes each day. But he was not having a bad time, was beginning to converse easily in French, knew considerable German, and was picking up Arabic without conscious effort. He felt almost sorry that he would be sent away in a short time.

Nevertheless, when he was notified that his two months' sentence had grown into four, by decision of divisional headquarters, he flew into a rage. He had behaved perfectly, and could not understand the system which led to his additional punishment. He had forgotten his joy at having escaped with less than a year!

It was then he first decided to desert when the opportunity came. He had a sense of remorseless pressure, of tremendous injustice. He refused to work, complained, and his stay lengthened by fifteen days, by a month, then by another month. When he got hold of himself, realized that he had best accept things as they were rather than butt his head against a stone wall, he discovered that he had served two months and seven days, yet had four months and eight days left!

His poor behavior, his outbursts, had brought him back to pushing a wagon on the tracks. He spoke to the old sergeant, announced that he had had enough of resistance. And he got back his good job, his wine, his privileges. The guards were not very strict, day or night. The prisoners were deprived of money, their uniform identified them, there was small chance of successful escape. Two men who tried it were brought back by the mounted *gendarmes*.

He had come to the labor camp early in September, and he was sent back to Sidi-bel-Abbès late in March, to pick up his enlistment where he had left it!

Those six months of hard manual labor had toughened him. His hands, especially, had grown, developed until he scarcely knew them for his own. He weighed ninety-four kilogs, two hundred and eleven pounds, yet his body seemed harder than ever before. Moreover, he felt that he had acquired a grip on his temper which he had lacked. He wanted to get away from the Legion, but he was resolved not to try anything rash.

In the Legion, a fault paid for is a fault forgotten. He was considered no different from any other man, just a casual waiting for assignment to an active detachment. According to normal routine, he should have been sent to Saida for training, but he applied for Moroccan duty. He obtained Captain Guayon's backing, and was kept in Bel-Abbès pending decision.

He received a first letter from his father, who promised to keep his whereabouts secret, as he had asked, and pointed out that five years, even six, would release him still young and capable to learn. His sisters were well; busi-

ness was as good as could be expected in view of prevailing conditions in the States. Even if Lloyd needed no money, the ten dollars he enclosed would not hurt. He added that a number of things had happened, much too long to write about, but that he had cut clippings from the newspapers, to keep against his return, and which he was sending along.

Brandon read the items with avid interest, yet with an odd, detached, impersonal feeling.

Beulah Brice's husband had divorced her a month after she had been discharged from the hospital. Another clipping concerned Thorn, who, it was said, would be remembered as the star football player mixed up in a scandal. Thorn had left for England to attend a famous university. Brandon had to make an effort to identify himself with the Chesty Maddock mentioned.

There were the scores of his college's football games for the past season, articles about the game. Seven victories and one tie out of nine games! And after an absence of but eighteen months, Brandon could not match many of the players' names with remembered faces! The coach, he learned, had rebuilt his powerful scoring machine around a phenomenal sophomore player, who ran faster than Thorn, blocked better than Maddock, etc. Brandon did not even recall that name!

On different paper, in larger print which he would have recognized anywhere as that of the hometown sheet, he read that the girl who had been his fiancée had married. He knew the groom —a rather nice, unimaginative guy.

He was startled, but not hurt. It was just as if he had heard a door slammed shut, somewhere in the distance. Until he had read that, he had clung subconsciously to a belief that the quarrel would be made up.

He walked to the bank, changed the ten dollars into francs.

Brandon felt the need of companionship. There was no use seeking for former acquaintances. Garrazi was with the mounted company at Kenadza in the Sahara; Meister was at Ain-el-Hadjar; Deschamps, transferred to the Fourth Regiment, was stationed in Agadir, on the Atlantic Coast. Corporal Detesch was at this moment between Ceylon and Singapore, on a transport bound for Indo-China. Sergeant Kolb was in Aleppo, Syria.

That was the Legion. Let another year pass, and those five would have shifted positions again, moving about the world, until chance brought two of them together once more, to pick up old feuds, to pick up old friendships.

A Russian occupied the cot next to his. Brandon invited him for the evening. They obtained leave until midnight, started out. They walked from café to café, Brandon drinking anisette steadily, the other ordering fancy drinks that could not be produced in moderately priced establishments, invariably accepting *marc* as a substitute.

They spoke little, went about their business of drinking with gloomy, serious resolution.

"Cafard?" the Russian asked Brandon, around ten-thirty.

The American nodded. Yes, he had *cafard,* but it was succumbing to the massive doses of alcohol. He had to search his thoughts to ascertain its original cause.

"Yes. My girl married. Learned today."

"Ah? That happens. *Patron,* another."

At eleven-fifty-eight, the two marched up to the gateway of the barracks, stiffened, saluted the sergeant on duty, surrendered their passes. At his nod, they saluted again, with great dignity. Then, side by side, grave, they crossed the yard as if wading knee-deep in cotton wool. Full to the tonsils, stunned, but neither drunken nor disorderly—two Legionnaires.

CHAPTER V

RECORDS IN BLOOD

SOME weeks later, Legionnaire Brandon reached the outpost of Dar-Kaid-Hassan, one man in a replacement of ten to bring the small garrison to its appointed strength of sixty. He had passed through a battalion depot at Taza, spent a couple of days at Kifane, before being assigned to the lonely hill fortlet, a few hours' march from the frontier of Spanish Morocco.

In the past, before the Riff campaign, the northern border had not been a favorite zone in which to send Legionnaires. Temptation to reach neutral soil had been too great. But it was known that there was a tacit agreement with the Spaniards that made it hard for deserters to get through. It was common rumor, also, that the local tribesmen, who had been ardent followers of Abd-el-Krim, bore no love in their hearts for Europeans, and that an isolated man was a dead man.

It was even said that these particular Moors, unbelievable though it may seem, were so disinterested in their hatred that they did not even bring the corpses in to collect a reward. The samples of mountaineers which Brandon saw on the roads somehow supported this creed.

They did not belong to any definite physical type, any more than do Americans or Frenchmen. Successive invasions of North Africa, over a couple of thousand years, had mixed the race. They ranged from lanky, red-haired chaps to absolute and unmistakable Negroes. But they were unified by their expression of fierce independence and truculent resentment. They carried no guns, but it was easy to guess that each one probably knew where to find a carbine, secreted somewhere with its breech carefully wrapped in oiled rags, and a handful of cartridges.

The outpost was constructed on a crest dominating ravines, a sort of side entrance toward the main road running from the Algerian border to Fez, via Taza. The trail had been hewn from solid rock by the Legion, and the cemented walls seemed a growth sprung naturally from the surrounding soil.

Even the buildings inside the enclosure were of stone. The troopers' quarters were spacious and clean. All the way from Algeria Brandon had felt a growing tension, as he neared the advanced posts, and that tension culminated here, in soldierly, disquieting alertness: The scent of the enemy was in the air.

The sergeant's first words sounded ominous.

"Each man is responsible for his own rifle up here, for his cartridges when they've been issued. You'd better not leave them in the rack during the night. The slobs contrive to get in here and take them. We lost two, six weeks ago. I'm not speaking for those who've been in blockhouses before, but for the newcomers. Otherwise, we'll get along. You keep off my corns, I'll keep off yours!"

The newcomers were distributed into various combat groups. As Brandon heaved his pack onto the shelf above the bunk assigned him, he looked at the men already there. Good, solid German lads, the majority. He unbuckled his harness, the combination of waist and shoulder belts supporting cartridge-pouches, bayonet and scabbard, suspended it from a peg and started to rub his loins vigorously. He was not tired from the long hike, but his hide was still sensitive to chaffing.

"Trade's sinking in, young fellow?"

Brandon turned, was face to face with Matloka. He had forgotten the man's very existence for months, yet was delighted to see him. His broad palm pressed the slender, steely fingers of the older man.

"Glad to see you—" He hesitated, wanting to employ 'sir', deciding it was too formal: "Glad to see you, Matloka."

The other offered him a cigarette. His

glance swept Brandon's face. Matloka had not changed; the sun, the weather had no effect on his already hardened skin.

"Through with your troubles, young fellow?"

"Not quite, as you see," Brandon replied with a faint grin. "I'm still in the Legion."

"I heard you were jailed. I was sorry about it. But it seems to have done you some good. You are different, cooler, less impulsive. You still drink?"

"Not in the same way, sir."

This time, the word had slipped out. Brandon liked Matloka, but could never be quite himself with him. He felt very young, awkward, slow-thinking.

This annoyed him, but was not altogether unpleasant. He somehow resented Matloka's effortless domination, yet wanted to have the older man like him, was flattered by his friendship. He asked Matloka the usual information concerning the outpost—its food, its sergeants, its commander.

"Everything fine," Matloka assured him.

At the six o'clock rollcall, Brandon became acquainted with the lieutenant commanding.

PORHOET, this officer, was all that he had imagined a soldier of fortune, in appearance, in speech. He was no longer young for a man of his rank, probably nearer forty than thirty-five, tall and lean, with the flesh and muscles stretched on his great frame of bones like catgut on a violin. He gave the impression of vibrating energy.

By this time Brandon had learned to read insignia on a uniform. He knew the crosses, the medals, what they meant. Porhoet had been cited fourteen times during the World War, nine times since. He had been wounded on several occasions, at least four in Morocco, as he wore the Cheriffian Order of Merit. A purple streak hacked his sunburnt face from the corner of the left eye to the tip of the protruding chin. There was a discolored pucker, a bullet hole over the same eye.

"The new guys, come out where I can see you," he called. He must have had a prodigious memory, for he called each of the ten by the name they had answered, without a mistake. And there was one Bazmierzak, one Proschervitch and one Dakrouchranka in the lot. "Hello, Lanburger," he greeted one. "Still knocking around? This is somewhat different from Nong-Kho, eh? No tigers to shoot, *no choum* to drink."

The old soldier facing him started to laugh softly. There evidently had been some joke connected with a tiger. And his wrinkled skin flushed with the pleasure of being remembered. Porhoet shook his hand, addressed Brandon:

"And what's a Servian doing with a name like that?"

"I'm an American, Lieutenant. A North American." Brandon recalled what he had been told as a child, wondered at this man's keenness of observation: "My grandparents were Croatians, I believe, *mon lieutenant.*"

"Trying to cover my mistake, eh?" Porhoet laughed cheerfully. "Oh, well, my own name's Breton, yet my father was a Greek. What does that make me? Right, a Legionnaire."

Porhoet was worshiped by his men, and Brandon understood why. Of course, he thought that evening, when he heard the officer's praise sung by all around him, he had deliberately thought of something personal concerning each soldier he met. But that effort to recognize individuals was worthy in itself.

The food was by far the best which Brandon had been given in the Legion. It compared well with any meal, anywhere. Hare stew, prepared with red wine, potatoes cut into huge cubes and fried in sizzling lard, were followed by a sort of cake made with bread dough and slices of dried apples.

"And he does it on the regular allow-

ance," an old Legionnaire explained proudly. "Doesn't cost the government a *sou* more than it should. That's because he watches everything himself. He'll kick a cook right out of his job if he catches him grafting."

lieutenant—he was a lieutenant, already—was rising and caught it where you see. Well, he choked the fellow, got up and caught up with us."

"Why wasn't he promoted?" Brandon wondered.

He was being watched, he knew.

"Know how he got that slash across the mug?" someone else asked. "That was in 1915. He had been sent on leave from the front in France, after being wounded. He came to Morocco, and followed an expedition, as an amateur, to kill time! Shot through the chest, he was, and left for dead in an ambush. During the night, one of the slobs starts pawing him over to take his money and his watch. Porhoet comes to, moves. The *bico* hacks for his throat, but the

"Doesn't want to be. He could be a battalion chief by now. But he said he was serving for the fun of it—he has a lot of money of his own, inherited—and that he wished to command men, not just anonymous soldiers. They say it was a woman who broke his heart, when he was a kid—"

That shifted the conversation to women, and Porhoet was soon forgotten.

Brandon had another sample of Porhoet's methods the following morning.

The lieutenant summoned him, and asked him for his complete record in the Legion. He nodded as the Legionnaire concluded his brief biography.

"There's a note that you have not been properly trained, that you were dispatched to Morocco on your request. Informal note, signed by a captain. Musketry neglected, it seems. Get your rifle and come with me." He led the way to a machine gun platform, from which they dominated the ravines forming a deep natural moat about the small fort. "Let me have that rifle."

He inserted a clip, indicated a rock six hundred meters down one slope, then shouldered, fired. Very soon, he handed the weapon over to Brandon. "She shoots high and a bit right. Try it—"

Brandon fired, the officer watching through field-glasses.

"Very good, very good—" Porhoet slapped the private's shoulders. "But you react slowly, take too much time. Speed is important, too, and you don't get it shooting at targets. I'll take you hunting a couple of times. Meanwhile, Sergeant Drobynski will take you on with the rest of the new men. He's a very fine shot himself, so don't expect too much praise."

As Brandon had not been dismissed, he followed the officer down the incline into the yard again. Porhoet spoke to him about America, about the army, the possibility of a war against Japan, in quick, darting phrases.

In a corner of the yard, two Legionnaires, stripped to the waist, were chipping away with hammer and chisel at a big block of stone, carving a grenade; this block was to be inserted over the arched gateway when it was finished.

"They used to have *tirailleurs* here," Porhoet said, "and they'll bring them back again sometime. But that stone will remain there, to show who held this place. You know, a gang of the Second Regiment, ours, took this position during the Riff business. Belongs to us."

"I was with that company, Lieutenant," one of the men said, looking up. "Seventeen guys down on the way up."

"Tough job," Porhoet commented. He pointed to a block of stone five feet away. "Eh, Brandon, can you lift that? You're a husky chap."

Brandon laid down his rifle, grasped the stone. He could lift it four or five inches; he was rather pleased with himself. The lieutenant rubbed his hands in the dirt, grasped the stone in turn. In a quick effort, he propped it on his thighs, then swung it up and away.

"It's a good trick," he remarked, wiping his palms. "Considered a sport among the Basques. Whenever I get a young, powerful kid in my outfit, I try him with it, just to show him it isn't what you start with that counts in life, but what use you make of it. It's a sort of a sermon."

"Yes, Lieutenant," Brandon admitted. "I'll practice."

Porhoet walked off after a parting word to the sculptors. He handed Brandon a cigarette, waited for the private to produce a match. Then, as he straightened and took the first puff, he smiled oddly.

"A man's life is his own. A man's friends are those he chooses." He looked at Brandon. "You're a clean man. You've had a little trouble, a very little compared to most of us. I believe in giving a little advice at times. Beware of a friendship that seems to offer too much on one side, little on the other. When a proposition seems too good, it usually is."

"I don't understand, *mon lieutenant*."

"Keep your eyes open, watch your associates." Porhoet shrugged. "Further than that, I have no right to speak. You may go."

Brandon left the officer, puzzled. Did Porhoet mean that he was wrong to believe the lieutenant his friend because of their informal chat of today? The officer was a bit queer, that was known. Some said it was because of his severe head wounds.

A patrol was returning from the outside: twelve men led by a sergeant. The men were dismissed in the yard. Brandon was hailed by Matloka, covered with dust, his face streaked with perspiration. The two went to the canteen for a half-bottle of wine. Matloka would know what Porhoet had meant, Brandon felt. But he decided not to ask him.

He did not wish to seem too young.

ALTHOUGH Dar-Kaid-Hassan appeared to be the ideal station, a contented military settlement, Brandon soon found out that it seethed with the usual bickerings, rivalries, petty jealousies and petty hates common to all outposts. Even Lieutenant Porhoet, experienced as he was in things of the Legion, could not run things his own way.

The post had a hero, Porhoet, and consequently, it had a villain, Senior-Sergeant Carral. This non-commissioned officer was said to be as mean and treacherous as could be thought of in the entire Corps. Enlisted as a French-Swiss orginally, he had had himself reestablished as a Frenchman, giving his true nationality when applying for a commission. This hope had been frustrated for the worst of motives, insufficient campaign record. The two meager, perfunctory citations he had received did not deceive experienced chiefs.

Rather slight, blond, with a clean-shaven, pinkish face and pale blue eyes, he was harmless enough in appearance. He had the makings of an excellent scribe, of a good administrative officer. Because of his disappointment, he had become what is known as a *chercheur de puces,* a flea-hunter. He knew regulations perfectly, and he used this knowledge. There was no detail too tiny for him to pick out, examine, use as an opportunity to punish.

It was known that Prohoet despised him and all he stood for. One wrote the records in blood, the other in copying ink. But if Carral asked for a man to be punished, giving a logical, valid motive, the lieutenant could not refuse. Naturally, as the enmity was almost open, any man liked by Porhoet became Carral's special target.

Carral investigated Brandon's record, noted that he had not spent many months in training. Porhoet had distinguished Brandon by devoting almost an hour to him. That was enough.

At the next inspection, he took Brandon's rifle in his hands. It was an 86-13 model, as issued to grenadiers in the combat groups. In a gentle voice, he said that it was not properly cleaned, but that he did not wish to punish a new comer for such a slight fault. At the first opportunity, Brandon must take the breech apart. The sergeant was kind enough to give him a short lecture on the proper fashion of cleaning a gun.

Brandon suspected nothing wrong. He merely believed that he had been care-

less after the shots fired by the lieutenant and himself the preceding day. As soon as he was freed, he took the weapon apart, paying particular attention to the pieces indicaed by Carral. Soon, he had them shining like silk. And he glanced up proudly as the sergeant approached, motioning for him to continue with his work.

Carral looked at the display of steel parts, beckoned to a colleague, pointed in silence. The other shrugged. He was a German, stolid and matter-of-fact.

"*Ja!* I know. But he doesn't remember—"

"You're a witness. He'd better learn," Carral declared.

Brandon was punished with two days' special fatigue, for having taken apart not only the breech mechanism but the repeating mechanism of his weapon. Corral stated that this was forbidden by the third paragraph, item fifty-seven, title eight, save at the direct order and under supervision of an officer. He was right.

The Legionnaire wore fatigue whites for two days, helped to dig a sanitary ditch, to lug the latrine cans to it. Then he was presented with another short stretch of punishment, because his bayonet was not greased.

He was once more puzzled and disgusted.

"Just wait," old Lanburger consoled him. "The lieutenant, he is watching. He lets him go so far; then he jumps on him."

This did not fail to occur.

Returning from an outside patrol, Porhoet summoned Sergeant Carral unexpectedly, and the non-com reported at the office. He had been surprised laboring over his beloved reports, and his feet were clad in rest shoes with felt uppers. The lieutenant pointed this out, and expressed regret that he should be compelled, by regulations, to order him to keep to his room for forty-eight hours. Motive: being improperly dressed.

"Lieutenant, that is splitting hairs in fourths—" Carral said.

"Eh?" Porhoet exploded, punched the table. "I'll split them in eighths, in sixteenths, if I want to! Ah, you wish to play games with me, my pretty little sergeant? Well, I am your man!" He touched the two oblongs of gold braid stitched on his cuffs: "And remember that these are trumps!"

The two were supposedly alone in the office. But there were scribes and orderlies listening in. Both Porhoet and Carral knew this. Brandon was left alone after that, and permitted to share the normal routine.

"Watch yourself," Matloka advised him. "You've got your finger between the tree and the bark, young fellow. Carral will be looking for a slip, and the next time, he'll see that it's something serious. If he had intended to quit, after that challenge, he'd have asked a transfer."

Brandon shrugged hopelessly.

"I'm not kidding myself. If Carral wants me to get into trouble, I'll be in trouble."

CHAPTER VI

"TREASON IS NOT IN YOU."

BRANDON was frightened, frightened in a peculiar fashion.

He felt time oozing out of his existence like blood from a gaping wound. He no longer dreaded prison. His experience had taught him that it was not necessarily hard to endure. As a matter of fact, Legionnaires were requested to work as hard as convicts at times. Pick and shovel weighed the same, whether you were nominally punished or not.

But he was frightened because each day in prison slid through the future and added itself to his enlistment. He estimated that he had been with the Legion ten months and a few days, yet in actual service in the ranks, he counted but three

months and two weeks of time. In other words, he would be discharged, at best, some seven months after the date originally stated!

The idea of desertion had sprouted in his mind very early, that first lonely night at Bel-Abbès. He had signed an agreement, that was true, but in modern times, such contracts could not be morally valid. They were as archaic as the apprenticeship-agreements of the past, which delivered a boy to whatever treatment chanced to befall him for a period of years.

That was his side of it, the one which concerned him. He might have reasoned that the Legion had not sought him, that he had been informed the life was hard at times; that the government had already invested several thousand francs in his equipment, his training. But between the government and himself stood Kolb, Detesch, Carral, who certainly had not been contracted for, so far as he, Brandon, was concerned.

Desertion: There were a half-dozen methods to achieve it. He could obtain money from home, five to six thousand francs, and follow an organized route. Somewhere along the line he would be provided with false papers, cheap civilian clothing, and ultimately landed in Malaga, Spain, in Gibraltar, or even in Genoa. Then he would need more cash to get back to the States. That would place a heavy burden on his family again. No, he must work out his own problems.

Without funds, escape was hard, but not impossible. Of course, there were many factors against him. He was conspicuous by reason of his size, his appearance, his accent. He would have to hide by day and walk by night, even if he obtained civilian garments to fit him. For if he were seen on a train, on a bus, his tanned face, his clipped hair, his speech would have the same effect as if he bore a card on his chest: "Deserting from the Foreign Legion!"

There was another method: To desert with arms and equipment, over the border. He would need companions; an isolated man would never pass through. In that case, the trick would be to reach the interior of the Riff, sufficiently far from the border so that local natives would not be tempted to return him for the forty francs he would bring. This had a drawback. If recaptured, the minimum was eight years in a penitentiary, after which he would have to serve out his original enlistment.

Lanburger also informed him, in a casual talk, that the Spanish officials did not love Legionnaires, and still less deserters. Too many Legionnaires had been with the Riffi during the rebellion. Some *teniente* or *sargento*, or even a civilian *alguacil*, who remembered the bitter days of Anual and the Sylvestre massacre, knowing himself beyond supervision and dealing with a man nobody would seek very long, might wave his hand and snap: *"Quatros tiros!"*

And the deserter would die like a dog.

"You need money," Lanburger said. He had deserted twice himself, both times successfully. Once in Singapore, homeward bound on a military transport, once from Algeria. He had returned both times. Why? "Listen, recruit, you'll understand some day. Something here draws you back. I'm crazy to leave now, to get back to Germany. Crazy, because I know I won't stay but return here to take my medicine. The Legion—well, *c'est le foyer de l'heimatloss*, the hearth of the homeless, it is; I was here before the War. I deserted from Tlemcen and went home via Italy. I served in Belgium, in France, in Russia, in Rumania and Italy. I was a sergeant. I have the Iron Cross, First Class. But three months after the Armistice, who stood in line in the courtyard of the barracks at Sidi-bel-Abbès? Frederic Lanburger.

"The colonel—he had been my captain with the mounted company in 1913—recognized me at once, and he called me by my old name, the one I had used before: 'I was wondering when you'd come back, you old malingerer. Well, did you

behave well on the other side, like a man trained in the Legion?' So I said, 'Sergeant, *mon colonel,* Iron Cross, First Class. Three times wounded.' So he said, 'Fine. It's a good thing nobody will recognize you out here. You'd be in for a court-martial.' And he laughed and gave me ten francs to buy a drink."

Lanburger was planning desertion, because he was restless. His old frame, which he had dragged around the globe for so many years, was seething with the need for a change. He had made two attempts, and had succeeded both times. Brandon decided to try it with him.

"We have to get someone with dough," the veteran said.

Brandon noted that the patrols from Dar-Kaid-Hassan, composed of Legionnaires, ranged east and west and south, seldom northward in the direction of the frontier. On the few occasions when they scouted in that direction, the lieutenant was in charge. And each time, the patrols encountered other detachments, composed of *Spahis, Tirailleurs, Mokhraznia.* These native soldiers were led by young Frenchmen of the colonial army.

"You can't expect much sympathy from them," Lanburger said. And he was right.

BRANDON received another letter from his father. Business was not very good, but nevertheless he enclosed twenty dollars. The other twenty, he explained, had been contributed by his sisters. There had been important developments. For months after Brandon had left (the Legionnaire automatically substituted his present name for Lloyd) letters had come for him from Thorn. Naturally, they had been returned unopened, as there was no forwarding address.

Recently, Thorn had learned somehow that his friend had disappeared and was not returning the letters himself. So he had communicated directly with Mr. Maddock. He wrote the truth about the accident, explained that it had happened only because of Chesty's loyalty to a team-mate. He had written to that effect to college officials, to the coach.

Thorn wanted permission to allow a friend of his, a sport columnist, to print the truth. He had been worried for over a year, and the dirty trick he had played on a comrade had hurt him worse than the surgical operations on his right leg. Brandon's father wished to know whether he should give the permission or not. He did not know, he added, what effect it would have upon Chesty's reinstatement as a player, but it was certain that he could go back to college. Their mutual friend had been informed, and stood ready to help.

"Jean Valjean of the campus," Brandon grumbled. What was the use of making a fuss, when he was tied down for years? When he got out, if ever, he would be rather old for college!

But if he returned within the year? His final decision was to ask his father to hold on until further notice, and to send him Thorn's exact address. He was beginning to get the true Legionnaire's perspective. Thorn had money, felt obligated.

"What's three or four hundred bucks to him?" Brandon mused. "He used to spend that and more on a party."

He showed Matloka the letter. And, in the noisy canteen, his elbows on the table, he whispered in English, concerning his intention to obtain funds from a friend. Matloka smiled.

"Were you really so illustrious, young fellow?"

"Well, look here—" Brandon produced the clippings sent him in the first letter, concerning football." See, they refer to me here. Compare the names: Lloyd 'Chesty' Maddock, eh? See what my father calls me? My name has been all over the newspaper's headlines, see? Football's important in America. It's hard for you to understand."

"Not in the least," Matloka protested. "A toreador is important in Spain. Even in France, I have seen a

change in cabinets pass second to a bicycle race. Finish your drink and come outside."

They walked out into the warm twilight of the yard. From a small native hamlet down below rose the plaintive drone of the afternoon call to prayer. Matloka led the way to a deserted lane between the defensive wall and a storehouse, stopped. He fumbled in an inside pocket, brought forth a thick wallet.

Brandon was curious. At least this chap was breaking down, would show him photographs, documents. There must be something of interest in all those papers stuffed in the wallet! Matloka's lean fingers moved, slid a sheet upward. Brandon gasped, not sure whether he saw rightly or not: It was a Bank of France note for one thousand francs!

And, so far as he could see, there were many of them. He did not dare guess how many. Thirty, forty, fifty? Even outside the Legion, it was a large sum of money. Here, it was a treasure! Brandon leaped at the only conceivable explanation, for the bill was new.

"Counterfeit?"

"You flatter me," Matloka retorted, rather coldly. "No. These are genuine enough. But they are not mine to give away. I gather that you intend to desert the Legion. So do I. Each for our own purpose. If you will desert with me, I shall pay your expenses and give you one of these every two weeks for the time you remain at my side. There may be danger, however. You understand that no one ever receives anything for nothing in an honest deal."

"What's the plan?" Brandon asked, breathlessly.

"You shall escort me over the border, serve me as a bodyguard. Later, if you are willing, we can find other employment for you. If not, you will sail for whatever destination you please—from Melilla, probably."

"You think the two of us can make it?"

"There are seven others. I have been considering taking you, because I like you, although you haven't much combat experience. We go with arms and baggage, you understand, and there may be fighting."

"Fighting? Against whom?"

"Against whoever gets in my way." Matloka's attitude had changed subtly. "I ask no oath of fidelity," he added. "Such a formality is easily forgotten, as attested by our desertion. Our interests will be similar, and that is the best guarantee. Keep this to bind the bargain—" He gave Brandon the note.

THE big Legionnaire felt an intense sensation of unreality. He pocketed the bill, and remarked: "Aren't you afraid I or one of the others may report you to the lieutenant?"

"What for?" Matloka shrugged. "Has he such things to give? Moreover, trai-

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tors are much rarer than the world imagines. Treason is not in you."

"And what's the scheme, Matloka? What do you intend to do?"

"You're to ask no question, Brandon."

The tone had changed also. Matloka spoke like a chief, and Brandon did not resent it. He was filled with elation that he had judged the man rightly from the start. Matloka was not an ordinary man. No man is who goes about with thousands of francs inside his private's *capote*.

They went back to the canteen, sat down before another bottle of wine. But Brandon felt that he had covered ten thousand miles in those few minutes outside. He did not dare ask who the others in the scheme were, scanned the faces to see a trace of self-consciousness. It was a strange situation: Seven others in that small garrison had collected a new thousand franc bill—and not one dared to spend it.

"You'll give me the word in advance, Matloka?"

"Yes. Keep quiet, do your job, and wait." The other, rising, offered his hand casually.

Brandon was so feverish that he could scarcely sleep that night. He was stirred by vague forebodings, premonitions of evil. That afternoon, he was coveting money with which to escape, looking for a way out. Now he had it, and yet his soul was not at peace. What did Matloka intend to do? Who was he? He had said that the money was not his own. Whose money was it? Who was willing to hire Legionnaires at five hundred francs a week?

Before long, in two or three days, he was pretty sure which of his comrades would compose the party. All of them, without exception, were veteran soldiers, each one known for his ability with rifle and grenade. Most of them were supposed to have held commissions.

There were Lambeke, Krüger, Breiss, Germans wearing reenlistment chevrons; there was Janreisch, who had been an Austrian staff-captain. There were two Russians, Dankowitch and Konnor, who had served in their teens under Grand-Duke Nicholas; Brussiloff, who had followed Wrangel against the Reds. And there was Jardins, a Hollander who had served, so he said, first in the Belgian Army, then as a volunteer with the Austrians! Not a man of them without decorations, not one who was not a mature soldier.

Matloka evidently preferred the training and reflection of such men to the greater enthusiasm and physical endurance of the young. Brandon sought to have Lanburger included, but the leader shook his head.

"Too gabby, that old chap."

On fatigues, on patrols, whenever Brandon was alone with any of the group, he sought to lead conversation upon the coming trip. But this brought no result except a warning from Matloka. Brandon must not seek to obtain information. Otherwise, he, Matloka, would regret that he had trusted him. He had a way of saying 'regret' that chilled one's blood.

"Maybe we better get maps," Brandon suggested once." The lieutenant has some."

"I'll have the maps needed," Matloka stated. "I have been over this country before."

"You have?" Brandon was surprised. Matloka was serving in the Legion for the first time. He had not been in the French Army. That left the Spanish Army and the handful of soldiers of fortune who had led the rebellious Riffi in the campaign against the European Allies." You must be a Spaniard!"

"I must be a Spaniard, true," Matloka admitted.

"How are we going to get extra ammunition?"

"Suppose you leave that to me."

It went against all Brandon's instincts to obey blindly, but he asked no more questions, allowed the days to slide. There was only one incident: Brandon was in the canteen, with Lanburger and

a couple of others, drinking wine. Some one suggested cognac, producing a ten franc bill. The small glasses were brought by the waiter, a Legionnaire with an apron on over his uniform.

Then Brandon felt a light touch on his shoulder. It was Janreisch, the Austrian. A smile played on his long, usually gloomy face. "Just a moment, Brandon. Being an American, you read English, don't you?"

"Sure."

"I'm not sure I understand this letter—" Janreisch produced a sheet of paper. Brandon followed him to a quiet corner, took the paper, unfolded it. It was covered with German script, and as he looked up, puzzled, the other spoke without ceasing to smile. "Pretend to read, say anything. I had to get you away. No cognac, no drunkenness. You'll take the one drink that is already poured; it will look better. Then you must leave at once. Understood?"

Brandon nodded, pretended to read. He went back to the table, drank the cognac, and left, as naturally as it was possible for a Legionnaire when free drinks were served. He resented being treated like a child, then remembered that he had not been a model of discretion before, when in his cups.

Nevertheless, this secret discipline within Legion discipline irked him. He would tell Matloka to take his bill and go to the devil, that is what he would do. But he looked at his new chief, and thought better of the idea. One thing he had to bear in mind was that he was watched, that if he was not sure who was included, the others knew.

HE HAD a bad scare when Lieutenant Porhoet, who had paid little attention to him after their first interview, joined him on the platform where he was on sentinel duty, in the middle of the night. The officer was smoking a pipe, a pipe provided with a lid, to avoid even a faint glow being perceived. He stopped near Brandon, hummed to himself for a few seconds, looking up at the glittering stars.

"Nice night, American," he remarked.

"Everything very quiet, Lieutenant, yes."

"You seem preoccupied these last few days. Anything wrong? Bad news from home?"

"No, Lieutenant."

"Something within the post? You got into a little trouble at first, but we fixed that up, didn't we? The Legion is not so bad after one gets used to it. All a question of staying long enough." Porhoet laughed heartily. "I hope you intend to stay, eh?"

"I more or less have to, Lieutenant."

"True." Porhoet grunted vaguely in the darkness. "But you might be worse off, I'll tell you that." He resumed humming.

Brandon had the definite impression that Porhoet had been probing him, inviting confidences. He wondered whether he should tell Matloka. No, that would be acting like a kid seeking to make himself interesting.

Things seemed to be at a standstill, save for one noteworthy development: Gradually, carefully, the men in the scheme were getting together, contriving to compose the same combat group. Just how this was managed, Brandon was not sure, but it offered no overwhelming difficulty for a man as well provided with cash as was Matloka. Very soon, only the corporal was an outsider. Krüger was automatic rifleman, Dankovitch and Lambeke were his purveyors, the men who carried additional ammunition, armed with pistol and carbine. Matloka, Breiss, Jardins, Janreisch and Brandon were the *voltigeurs*, men armed with rifles. Konnor, a big, freckled chap, was grenadier.

The group was one man short, because of redistribution, Lambeke serving as loader when needed. The corporal was Eullard, a Frenchman emerged from the disciplinary battalion, a man who 'didn't

care what happened, so long as he was left at peace'. He was in to serve fifteen years and get a pension. He counted nine years already.

This meant that the nine participants in the desertion plot would leave the blockhouse at once, for patrols. Brandon felt that the time was drawing near. Matloka could not chance delaying until another shake-up dispersed his followers into other formations.

At last, one evening, Matloka led him aside.

"It's for the next three days. There's a patrol due Monday. Don't get punished and put on special fatigue, Brandon. We'd have to leave you behind. In case you can't avoid it—Carral's still looking for trouble—say nothing. I give you my word of honor that, if I live, you will receive funds to make off by yourself inside six weeks. Take your full kit, extra food if you can manage it, and whatever you wish to take away with you."

"Understood, Matloka."

Brandon spent over sixty miserable hours. He was not certain whether he wished Carral to punish him or not. There was something ominous in the determination of Matloka. He was a man who would not bother with the formalities of court-martial when he needed a man out of his way! But Corral paid no attention to him at this time. It was impossible to tell whether the lieutenant had scared him off or if he was waiting for something very serious.

Monday morning, at seven o'clock, the patrol was ready to start: Two groups, commanded by Sergeant Drobynski, instructed to proceed in a westward direction for fifteen kilometers, turn some distance south and return, ascertaining that no suspicious grouping of natives roamed the hills. They were to return for the six o'clock rollcall. It was a routine inspection. Brandon had participated in four similar forays.

Lieutenant Porhoet came from his quarters in his shirt-sleeves, a fatigue cap on the side of his head, cheerful and pleased. He looked at the double row of men, nodded: "Well turned out, Sergeant. You needn't be ashamed to be seen out with them."

But some dim instinct prevented him from giving the order to go. Brandon half-believed that the officer had known what was going on right along, and would speak at the last moment. There he was, beckoning to the sergeant!

"Haven't had any rows around here for a couple of years," Porhoet said. "Still, you never can tell. *I feel it may rain.* Don't get careless. All right, get going."

"Forward—'arch!"

Brandon heaved a sigh, relief or disappointment mixed in it. He marched out, seventh man in the right file, bewildered to think that he had probably seen Porhoet for the last time, that this was his farewell to Dar-Kaid-Hassan.

CHAPTER VII

THE ROAD TO DANGER

THEY went down the steep slope, on the rocky trail, rifles on shoulders, keeping step. They rounded the shoulder of a long rock-strewn slope tufted with bushes. Drobynski turned his head:

"March at will—"

The hobnailed boots beat in broken rhythm. Some of the men gnawed large pieces of bread, munched chocolate. They talked among themselves, in the lead group, pointing out familiar landmarks. Meager country, with the stone breaking through the thin grass, sparsely wooded at intervals, desolate at the hump of a mangy sheep. Yet, not many years before, men had fought bitterly for this soil, half-naked warriors moved by ancient, venerable emotion.

A man started a marching song. Other voices joined in, strong and melodious. The sergeant sent three men of the first

This was Morocco, and lives were cheap.

group ahead, and they would lift their rifles when they reached a crest, to report that all was clear. Ten kilometers from the outpost, Drobynski called a halt.

"Targhil Ridge," he announced. A round topped hill barred the way, like a stranded whale. The trail forked here, to hug each flank. And Brandon knew something that the sergeant did not know: On his decision, made in the next five seconds, depended an important factor: Whether the actual desertion took place with or without violence.

The larger patrols ordinarily separated here, one skirting the north side, the other keeping on the main trail. They joined at the other end, five kilometers west. And for more than an hour, they progressed out of sight of each other, although within rifle sound. If Drobynski kept with the leading group, all was well. If he came with the second, he would have to be overpowered.

"Corporal Eullard, you take your group north."

"All right, Sergeant, understood."

"We'll meet at the brook. So long."

"Come on, come on," Eullard barked. "Get going."

And in ten minutes more, Sergeant Drobynski and eleven comrades had vanished from Brandon's life. Matloka broke his reserve sufficiently to smile at his friends. All was going well. And events started to slide with the force and relentlessness of an avalanche.

THEY had covered sixteen hundred meters and were separated from the other detachment by more than a kilometer of earth and rock, when Matloka hailed the corporal: "Eh, Eullard!"

"Corporal to you," Eullard retorted. "We never herded cows together that I know of! Well, what?"

He had turned around, halted. Mat-

loka calmly went up to him, took the carbine from his hand. At the same time, Breiss clasped him in his arms from behind, and Konnor took away his pistol. The poor fellow did not as yet know what was happening.

"What's the idea? What does this mean?" He clutched for his weapons, foolishly. "Are you going to stop kidding, or do I have to get mad?"

"Listen to me, Eullard—" Matloka started.

"I'll listen to you! Give me that—"

Matloka nodded, and Konnor slapped the corporal across the face, so hard that the man fell back three steps. He sputtered for a second, then looked at the faces of the men surrounding him, understood, and grew very calm.

"I get it! You're going over the wall, eh? I suppose there's no use telling you you're a pack of damn fools—"

"Not the least." Matloka faced him squarely. "We'll take your guns and cartridges away. We need them more than you do. You take this letter to the lieutenant. I explain everything, clear you. You fellows, if you have anyone to notify of your whereabouts, you can write a few lines, and trust them to the corporal. Brandon, you may write your father to tell him you're leaving the Legion. Here's an envelope and some paper—" The leader tendered these with his indelible pencil." No information concerning our plans or your destination."

Brandon scribbled hastily, showed the sheet to Matloka, who nodded. Four of the others also addressed envelopes, wrote a few lines. Matloka counted them, addressed Eullard: "I'm putting in five francs for the postage. Tell the lieutenant the letters contain no useful information for him."

"I'll be demoted for this," the corporal grumbled.

"I suppose so," Matloka agreed. He brought out a bank note. "This is in compensation. But no! If they found it on you, they would think you had been bribed. I'll stick it in with a note to the lieutenant, telling him what it's for, and maybe he'll give it to you. Sorry, Eullard, but you see how it is! See, I seal the envelope. You're not supposed to know what I have written."

"The mess will get it," the corporal grumbled again. "He'll buy blood-sausage or something for some Sunday!"

"Probably. Now, your cartridges, your stuff."

When Eullard was stripped of his equipment, Matloka led him to the foot of a small, gnarled tree. The corporal then saw that he was to be tied, and protested loudly:

"Some *bico'll* come along and slice my head off!"

"If you yell like that, you'll attract them all the faster. Put your hands around that tree, in back of you. That's it—" Konnor lashed the wrists with belting, then fastened both feet around the ankles. "We could gag you, but you know you have as much chance to be heard by the natives as by the patrol, so you'll be quiet." Matloka looked at his watch." Drobynski will reach the meeting place in thirty-five to forty minutes. He'll wait half an hour for us to show up, then investigate. It will take him fifty minutes to an hour to get here. That gives us about a two-hour lead. We won't linger by the way to pick daisies, you may be sure, so that he has no chance to catch us before dark. I'm reasoning this out for him, so you can tell him. And if he does come after us, and locate us by a miracle, tell him we'll fight. We have three men less, but he'll be attacking. He'd best trot back to the post and report."

"Give me a drink before you go," Eullard pleaded.

"Sure thing." Matloka pressed the nuzzle of his canteen between his lips, allowed the corporal to drink his fill. "Well, good luck. Hope nothing happens to you. They'd be sure to blame us."

"And that," Krüger announced mildly," would hurt our feelings."

Matloka led the way due north,

straight up a wooded incline. Several times, Brandon turned to look at the corporal; then he followed the others, who did not waste a glance backward, over the crest. As soon as they struck the rocky bottom of a dry stream, Matloka gave the signal to turn left, toward the west.

"Where are we going, Matloka? I thought we—"

"From now on, call me 'captain'," Matlock corrected him. Then he smiled: "I have more leisure to answer your questions and we cannot be overheard now. We must presume that Drobynski, who is a resolute non-com, will try to follow us. So we depart for the north. But now, being out of sight of Eullard, we double toward the very spot where Drobynski now is. Tomorrow we get near the border. But we cross during the next night. That will bring us where we're going at the appointed time, Wednesday morning, shortly after dawn."

AT THREE in the afternoon, Matloka called a halt.

He announced that all danger of immediate pursuit seemed passed. The men were glad to rest, for most of them carried a heavier load than normal. The special sacks for automatic-rifle ammunition were full; each man, with the exception of Brandon, who carried his allotment of ninety cartridges, had contrived to obtain, filch, wheedle, additional rounds. Konnor had twelve rifle-grenades instead of eight, and there were sixteen hand-grenades for the detachment. What miracles of thought obtaining those extra supplies had called for, Brandon could guess.

"We won't use the automatic unless absolutely necessary," Matloka declared." It eats up too much ammunition. The weight must be redistributed, so that all may share the burden."

This was done. Then they had a scanty meal of bread and tinned meat, washed down with wine from their canteens. Brandon's companions seemed neither elated nor depressed. A sort of grim, almost sullen resolution drove them. Matloka and Janreisch consulted a map; then the order was given to resume marching.

Several times the party left the beaten trail and took to the slopes to avoid native camps. At twilight Matloka brought them into a narrow ravine, a stony gully, where they were to camp for the night. No fires were lit, although all were permitted to smoke. There was nothing to do, except to wait for morning.

Brandon was noticing that Janreisch seemed second in command, with Dankowitch and Jardins as occasional advisers. As for the rest, including himself, they were kept apart from the conferences among the chiefs.

The conversation was in German—a different German than Brandon was accustomed to, for he did not understand much of it. Janreisch, who had been a good fellow, not at all snobbish, back at the post, was altered. He appeared to snap his sentences, to bite off his words with a ring of authority. Jardins' slow voice interrupted gently, as he balanced his great round head, with a face red as a tomato, in approval or dislike.

Konnor, Krüger and Breiss did not seem interested. Brandon questioned Lambeke, a more affable, talkative fellow. He did not know very much. He doubted if anyone knew quite what Matloka was planning. He gathered that the man, a Spaniard, undoubtedly, had held a high command in the Riffi some years back. Then the government had changed in Spain. He had been exiled, probably had thought he could return unnoticed, if he penetrated from the French side, after having lost his identity by joining the Legion.

"Here's the way it looks to me: He thinks that a great many of the army men in Morocco are on his side at heart, against the government. He's probably in touch with some one across the way. Some of us are just guards, to protect him if there is a fuss at the beginning.

The others, the guys you see with him, he probably will commission. If he can start an uprising in the army on this side of the Riff, somebody else will start one near Ceuta. So far as I am concerned, as soon as he is in with his friends, I'll ask for the bargain to be carried out: My dough, a quick trip to Melilla, and from there to Italy."

"You won't stick with him?" Brandon wondered. "Why not?"

Lambeke lowered his voice cautiously.

"For several good reasons. To start with, he thinks he'll play Napoleon returning from Elba. They always think of the Hundred Days and never of Waterloo. He may win some followers at the beginning, but he isn't allowing for jealousy. He can't be such a big shot, or we'd have seen photos of him in the papers. You just need one look at him to see that he is another Mussolini!" Lambeke laughed softly: "But it won't go even that far, I am afraid. The cards are stacked against us.

"Want to know why? Well, he may have got away with enlisting in the Legion without being spotted, but he's had to get his money through, his papers, his information. That means he has to be in touch with an organization of some sort, and that means spies. Even the French Intelligence may have wondered at some of his actions—he, a simple second-class Legionnaire. He had to pull wires to be stationed just where he wanted to be, and somewhere along the line, some smart scribe reported it to clear himself if anything broke.

"I'd make a bet this minute that the wrong guys will be waiting for him Wednesday. We can't even be sure the French did not let him go on purpose. This is my third try in an affair like this, what you might call a *coup d'état*. The first got me six months in jail. That was in Munich. The second made me leave Germany, because it meant the firing-squad if I was caught."

Brandon looked at him, astonished.

"Yet here you are. I don't get it."

"It's one chance in ten. My side is on top in Germany, and I want to get back and collect. I'm wise enough to know it won't last forever, and to want to rake in while it's time."

WHEN darkness came, talk ceased. Soon, the majority of the men were asleep. Konnor rolled on his back and snored, his fists tightly clenched, until someone tossed a handful of dirt into his face. The night was cold, and the strong wind whined through the gully.

At dawn, Matloka ordered them up. The man appeared made of steel. He had hardly slept, but his strength, his energy, were intact. They washed at the nearest brook, drank their fill. Silent as they had been before, they were even more sullen now, as if a premonition of impending trouble weighed their souls.

There was a good deal of marching and counter-marching. Matloka and Janreisch consulted their maps, made pencil marks on them. Brandon understood from Lambeke that they were figuring out the movements of the various detachments which had been sent to locate them. But he did not comprehend the delay in making a break for foreign soil.

Twice shots thudded in the distance, echoed, bringing them to a halt. Then Jardins spoke: "Signals—" and they walked on. The general direction was northwest. Matloka was jockeying them through the searching parties, avoiding villages, encampments of natives.

The morning passed, the afternoon. At about four-thirty, a vague drone filled the sky, with a minute vibration like the whirring of an insect against a window pane. Matloka seemed alarmed for the first time. The small detachment was strung out on an almost nude hill, offering no more cover than the palm of one's hand. And that was a plane approaching, still concealed by the highest crests.

There were three small native huts some distance away, surrounded by a *zeriba* of spiny bushes. A few goats were scattered nearby. And it was toward these that Matloka led the way, at a headlong pace. The nine men broke into the enclosure, and a brace of startled women started to scream. Matloka reassured them hastily, herded them before him into the principal building, half-residence, half-stable.

There were four small children present: two boys perhaps nine and eleven years old, a little girl of three, and a very small baby, astraddle his mother's hips. They were frightened and started to scream and cry. But Matloka did not worry about the noise they made. The aviators would be deafened by their motors. And the fifteen persons huddled in that small room.

The roar of the engines swelled, passed directly overhead. And as it dwindled away, the deserters breathed easier. There were strings of onions hanging from the roof, there were dried fish on an enormous wooden platter, the remnant of a stew in a brass kettle. Konnor rekindled the fire in the cast iron stove, started to cook. To still the women's protests, Matloka offered first paper money, and when this was scorned, fumbled inside his belt, and drew out a gold coin.

This worked magic. The women smiled, the children were stilled. Brandon started to munch the highly spiced food greedily. It was hot, and he needed nourishment. Two or three of the group took their plates to the door. Lambeke was about to go out. Then they all were aware of the droning once more: The machine was returning!

"Did they spot us?" Matloka asked anxiously.

"No," Jardins declared confidently. "I paid special attention. They were not in sight when we got in here."

They waited tensely. The flyers must be suspicious, for they were flying very low, and the sound of their motors was deafening. The gigantic, cross-shaped shadow of the machine skimmed over the ground, visible through the open door. The roar abated somewhat, increased again.

"They're circling," some one said, tonelessly.

"What good will it do them? There's no place for them to land, and if they did, there are but two of them, three at the most."

"They have a heavy machine gun," Janreisch reminded them all, "and wireless . . . they can report our exact position, and the detachments will converge on us, screening the road north."

"Maybe they have bombs," Breiss muttered.

For a moment a surge of terror submerged them, even Matloka, even Dankowitch. They could reason that the aviators would hesitate to bomb native dwellings, for fear of massacring innocent people. But this was Morocco, and lives were cheap. And that plane continued circling, swinging far away for a few minutes, returning obstinately. It was maddening.

"Think they've seen enough to shoot in a radio?"

"No. If they were even halfway sure, they'd let go a few rounds with the machine gun to flush us out," Jardins stated. "Sit tight. I never saw such a gang of jittery old women in my life."

Konnor had taken the jacket off the automatic rifle. He inserted a long magazine, containing twenty-five cartridges, into the chamber.

"I'll fix them," he said.

"Don't be a fool," Matloka snapped. "Keep out of sight."

"I can hide against the wall, with the gun ready. They're not more than thirty meters when they swoop—you can hear the wind in the wings—and I can't miss at that range. We can't have them hanging around all afternoon."

"Hold on a while longer," Matloka ordered.

"What's the use? They're suspicious.

They've been over six or seven times."

"All right, if they come back."

BRANDON had stood aside, as rattled as the others. What had made the aviators suspicious, why had they wasted twenty minutes or more on this desolate hamlet? Something must be apparent from above, a departure from the usual routine followed by natives when planes flew overhead. What was it?

"I have an idea," he said, stepping forward.

Naturally, it was Konnor, probably the least intelligent, who laughed loudest. "Now for an American plan!"

"Go ahead, young fellow," Matloka agreed, smiling.

"Well, the noise scared the goats; they're running loose. Those guys know there's someone here, because of the smoke. But no one has come out to see what was the matter, to keep the goats from beating it all over the place."

"I wouldn't wonder if that was it," Janreisch approved. "Those flyers are old timers, probably, and know that the women are usually at the house. And curiosity is stronger than fear."

Matloka spoke to one of the women, the one with the baby. She picked up a stick, and started out. But before she left, Matloka took the child in his arms and made a playful, but significant gesture on its soft little throat with his thumb and forefinger. Obviously, the safety of the child depended on the woman's loyalty.

The Mauresque gave an excellent performance, out in the open. She pursued the goats, struck them with the stick, shrilled loudly. And when the plane swooped overhead once more, she brandished her weapon toward it. Matloka then pushed the two little boys out, with instructions to imitate her.

The scouting machine banked, turned and headed westward. Its drone dwindled, to an imperceptible vibration, which died out at last. The deserters waited ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, but the plane did not return.

"That was it," Matloka conceded. "Brandon, whatever happens, you've paid your passage. We'd have two or three men's blood on our hands at this moment, but for you. And it is bitter enough to shed blood when it's necessary. When it is because of a mistake—"

"And," Dankowitch put in, smoothly, "there is this to consider. As matters stand now, we risk prison if caught. If we had killed those fools, it would have meant the firing-squad. Brandon, you'll make a Legionn—" he caught himself—"an excellent deserter."

(*to be continued*)

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"John, what's the matter . . ."

THE STRANGER

By

Henry Herbert Knibbs

YOUNG Hardesty was puzzled that a homesteader should try to make a go of it in the desert. But as Harper himself said, the land was open to entry, and he was open to conviction. He settled on a great V-shaped bench of fairly level ground in the foothills, about three miles south of the Mebbyso mine. There was water in the foothills. The mountains afforded plenty of timber for fence posts, cabin logs and fuel.

The advent of John Harper was a high spot in Young Hardesty's life. He could do things. He was a good shot. Also he was a good hand with horses, managing to keep his team fit on mountain hay, helped out by what grazing they could pick up on the homestead.

To Young Hardesty's disappointment Harper knew nothing about minerals. Young Hardesty himself, schooled by the old prospector, Bedrock, knew considerable. Adopted by Bedrock, Young Hardesty worked with him at the Mebbyso mine. Harper was their only neighbor, in a country where neighbors were scarce enough. He could handle a gun, and he knew stock. But above all, he could play the fiddle. That made him right with Young Hardesty.

Often enough Young Hardesty found excuse to chouse over to Harper's, usually in the early evening, when he would sit and listen to the lank Missourian saw away at dance tunes. It was the homesteader's only recreation, his

one luxury. Young Hardesty couldn't understand why Harper didn't drink or smoke. If it hadn't been for the fiddle Young Hardesty might have considered him not quite a real man. But a fellow had something to him who could work like a stamp mill all day and then sit back and fiddle to beat the band.

Even old Bedrock, who didn't take to folks quickly, admitted that the man from Missouri was sound timber. Yet Bedrock prophesied that the land he was working would be abandoned in less than three years.

"It ain't that he don't mean business," declared Bedrock as he and Young Hardesty sat by their supper fire one evening. "In six months he's strung more fence and turned more soil than two men could in a year. And he's built him a right neat cabin. But I figure his talents won't get him nowhere."

"You mean playin' the fiddle?"

"No, son. The fiddle is the only company he's got. What I eman about his talents is kind of hard to explain. He's a man that laughs as well as smiles, which is a good sign. But there's a look in his eye that tells me he just can't win. I've seen that same look in the eyes of fellas fighting lung trouble — game boys, no quitters, but sliding down hill all the time."

"I don't see nothin' wrong with his lungs," said Young Hardesty vigorously. "He's long-geared, but he's as strong as a bull."

"Mebbyso. But it ain't always health and hard work that gets a man to the top. Luck's against him. It's in his eye."

Young Hardesty washed the supper dishes, tidied up around camp and said he was going over to Harper's and take another good look at the homesteader's eyes just to prove that Bedrock was talking up a tree.

About nine that evening Young Hardesty was back at the mine. Bedrock sat by the fire smoking his pipe.

"It ain't his eyes," declared Young Hardesty. "It's worse than that."

"How come?"

"He's got a wife back east. Told me so himself. Sent a letter to her yesterday, tellin' her to pack her war bag and come on out here. He's gone and put red and yella window curtains on the cabin, and dinged if he ain't tryin' to raise some plants in the front yard. He ain't been playin' the fiddle for a whole week. Been workin' nights to get things ready for her."

Bedrock's lips moved but he said nothing aloud. With his long white beard, his silvery eyebrows, his steady blue eyes fixed on space, he looked like some ancient seer peering into the dim future. For a moment Young Hardesty was impressed, but he soon returned to the subject nearest his heart. "With a woman around there's no use me goin' over to the cabin in the evenin's to keep him company."

"Mebby she's a real fine woman. Harper ain't the kind to take up with a no-account."

"She's a woman, anyhow," complained Young Hardesty. "Wonder what in hell he had to go and get married for?"

It was plain that Young Hardesty had taken quite a fancy to the homesteader and his fiddle. Harper himself liked the boy. Once as Bedrock and the homesteader were discussing things in general, Harper laughingly referred to Young Hardesty's fondness for the fiddle. "He sits there like a kid dreaming of big things when I play the old gourd. Sometimes when he comes over I'm so tired I can hardly work my fingers on the strings. But I rosin up the bow and go to it. I couldn't disappoint a boy like that."

Bedrock had nodded understandingly. "Any time you need a hand over here, just whistle. Me and the boy can always take time off to help a neighbor."

FOR a week following the news that there was a woman in the case, Young Hardesty spent his evenings with Bedrock. The morning that Bedrock took the pack burro and set out for Bowdry, Young Hardesty decided to spend the day at Harper's. Perhaps the homesteader would take a day off and go deer hunting. Young Hardesty saddled his pony, Shingles, and taking his old sawed-off Sharp's rifle in case he should happen to see a coyote, he rode over to the homestead.

When Young Hardesty came to the edge of the clearing he reined up. He wanted to surprise Harper. It wasn't often that Young Hardesty was able to spend a whole day at the homestead. Harper's big tortoise-shell cat sat in the open doorway licking its paw. Out in the field the team stood hitched to the wagon. Harper was nowhere in sight. Perhaps he was up at the spring tinkering with the new water trough. Funny, though, that he would leave the team untied like that. Near the spring lay some recently connected pipe, and some of the homesteader's tools. He must have been working at the spring that morning, because he never left tools scattered around overnight.

Riding back to the cabin, Young Hardesty dismounted. The tomcat scurried into the room. Harper hadn't gone to town or he wouldn't have left the cabin door open. As usual, everything was neatly in place. Queer, though, about those spots on the floor—bright red spots on the clean boards. Harper wasn't one to kill a deer and pack it into the cabin. He would have hung it and dressed it outside.

Embers smoldered in the rough stone fireplace. Young Hardesty stared at the bright lithograph on the wall, the gay curtains, the homemade table and chairs. If Harper was home his rifle would be in the corner near the doorway. The rifle was not there. Perhaps the homesteader was out after deer. Young Hardesty glanced at the fiddle case on the shelf above the table. Everything seemed as it ought to be, except those spots on the floor, and the team standing untied in the field.

Perhaps the homesteader was in the bedroom, writing a letter to his woman. Tiptoeing to the bedroom doorway, Young Hardesty glanced in. The famaliar rough stand made from a packing case, the lamp, the few books, the ink bottle and pad of letter paper, were sharply photographed on Young Hardesty's mind as his gaze dropped to the floor. As if he had slid from the stool near the stand lay Harper, his hairy, freckled hands half open, his shoulders humped up in a queer fashion. His face was hidden by the bed blanket, which evidently had been dragged from the bed as he fell.

"John," said Young Hardesty softly, "what's the matter?"

Dazed, the boy stared at the small hole in the heavy gray shirt, at the dark stain round it. He spoke to Harper, knelt and pulled back the soggy shirt. The homesteader had been shot through the heart.

Now that Young Hardesty knew that the homesteader was dead, his mind began to work. It took all his strength to get the lank, heavy body onto the bed. It was not the first man Young Hardesty had seen shot to death. But none of the others had been his friend.

Sometime, next month, Harper's woman would come. His woman? Young Hardesty glanced at the stand. The ink bottle had been upset. There were ink stains all over the letter pad. On one sheet, in a heavy scrawl, was written, "Dear Annie. . . ." No date or name place—just the two words.

Again Young Hardesty prowled through the living room, looking for the homesteader's rifle. It was missing. Nothing else seemed to have been disturbed. But wait a minute! Harper

always kept his cartridges alongside the fiddle case on the shelf. Only last week he had bought two boxes. But the two boxes of cartridges were also missing.

Who shot him? Who had taken his rifle and shells? Young Hardesty ransacked the big, tin-lined chest where Harper kept his provisions. Always the homesteader had kept a good supply. The chest was now empty. On the top beam running along one side of the cabin crouched the cat, its eyes wide and glaring. Heretofore the tomcat had always been friendly.

"You needn't to look at me as if I done it!" cried Young Hardesty, as a sudden, inexplicable anger seized him. The cat, glaring at him as if he were the murderer! And those dam' horses, standing out there in the field just as if everything was right and regular! To hell with all of 'em! John Harper was murdered. He hadn't any enemies. He had been in the country only long enough to be known to mighty few folks. Who killed him?

Young Hardesty tiptoed to the fiddle case on the shelf, opened it. Young Hardesty's mouth trembled. The old fiddle wouldn't talk any more, now. He could see Harper sitting with his chair tilted back against the wall, sawing away on the fiddle, his gaze kind of faraway and queer; Harper toiling for his woman, fixing up the cabin with curtains, and sticking plants in the dooryard. Only that very morning he had been fitting pipe to run water from the spring down to the cabin to make it easier for her. Always working, whistling, happy.

Young Hardesty recalled what Bedrock had said about the homesteader's eyes—that he just couldn't win. How did Bedrock know? Sometimes the old man seemed kind of spooky, saying things would happen when nobody else believed they would. But Bedrock believed in Godamighty. Perhaps that was why he knew.

BUT thinking about Bedrock wasn't getting anywhere. The murder would have to be reported to the folks in Grant. From there the postmaster could notify the sheriff in Bowdry. But first the horses had to be taken care of, the cat chased out of the cabin, the door closed. Then he would look around. Perhaps there were tracks.

Young Hardesty's search for tracks near the cabin was futile. He decided to come back and look more thoroughly, after he had reported the murder in Grant. Mounting his pony, he was crossing the field when a slug whistled past his head. With his heels in his pony's ribs, Young Hardesty sped for the brush. The shot had been fired from the hillside south of the cabin.

Once under cover of the brush, Young Hardesty dismounted and crept back to the edge of the clearing. He lay watching the distant hillside. Nothing broke the sunlit silence. Young Hardesty rode on down through the brush, struck into the south road and headed for Grant. When he got through there, he would come back and whipsaw that hillside. He might find tracks that would lead to the discovery of the murderer.

Grant, about three miles south of Harper's homestead, was not much more than a name. The owner of the general store was postmaster; at times officiated as coroner and doctor, so far as his experience and his small stock of drugs and medicines went. A store and blacksmith shop represented Grant's commerce and industry. The blacksmith was also a veterinarian of a sort.

Following Young Hardesty's arrival that morning, the blacksmith drove over to the homestead and fetched the body to Grant. Postmaster and blacksmith decided that Harper's wife would have to be notified, and because of the great distance to Bowdry, the body would have to be buried. Young Hardesty, who felt that he should have a word about

all this, agreed that Harper's woman should be notified. But he objected to the burial until an autopsy was held. He didn't know what autopsy meant as a word, but he knew what he wanted.

"You're a horse doctor, Jim," he said to the blacksmith. "You can dig out that bullet."

"What's the use? He's dead. Anybody can see what killed him."

"Mebbyso. But I want to see that bullet."

Bridges, the postmaster, shook his head. "Having no regular license, I don't know but what it's against the law to cut up a dead man."

Young Hardesty was stubborn. "I want to see that bullet."

"Kind of curious to see what a slug looks like after it's killed a man?"

"No, damn your hide! If it's the kind of slug I think it is, it is like to make a whole lot of difference, finding out who shot John. Me and him was friends. I want to see that bullet."

"Suppose you did see it, what good will that do? It won't do him no good. I'm willing to knock together a box and bury him proper. But damn if I'll go cutting him up."

Young Hardesty's face was pale, his dark eyes burning. "If you don't, dinged if I won't dig it out myself. You all are a hell of a bunch of humans! I reckon I know what's the matter with him. He's got all kinds of tools to cut into horses, only he don't know how to use 'em."

"I don't, eh? If Bridges here, says the word, I'll dig out that slug as neat as anybody."

"Go ahead, Jim," said the postmaster. "Maybe the boy knows what he is talking about."

Half an hour later the three of them were gazing at a bullet with a tiny cross filed in its tip. Young Hardesty put the bullet in his pocket. "It's what the law sharks would call evidence. How did I know about it? Well, one evenin', while Harper was playin' the fiddle I emptied the magazine of his Winchester — six shells. I filed a cross on all of 'em, just for luck. He laughed when I told him every one of those slugs would sure get their meat, now. Then I told him how once I filed a cross in a forty-four and packed it around just for a kind of lucky piece."

"That's a fact!" said the postmaster. "The kid got that Apache renegade that tried to kill him. And that forty-four with the cross on it was the only cartridge the kid had. But what's that got to do with John Harper?"

"Plenty. The fella that killed Harper shot him with John's own rifle and his own cartridges. He took John's Winchester, and the shells, and all the grub in camp. What I mean, I'm goin' to find out who's got that Winchester."

"Regular detective, eh?" snorted the blacksmith.

"You ain't carin' a whole lot that he's dead. He was just a hoe-man to you fellas. But me and John Harper was friends. Supposin' you write to his woman back east and tell her, and she comes out here. Then you'll tell her her man was shot, and that you buried him. Mebby she'll ask you why you didn't do somethin' about it. Mebby you can figure out the answer to that."

"It'll take a day or two for my report to get to the sheriff," said the postmaster. "Probably it'll take a couple of days more for a deputy to get here. We got to bury Harper. As for trailing the man that killed him, that ain't our job."

"If Harper had been one of your kin you would be hot enough to saddle up and ride," said Young Hardesty.

"That would be different."

"Well, it ain't different with me."

HARPER was buried that afternoon. Young Hardesty helped dig the grave, helped cover the rough pine box. Being no hand at spelling, he asked the

blacksmith to put Harper's name and date of his death on it.

"But don't paint it on," said Young Hardesty. "Burn it in with a iron, so the wind and rain won't wear it off."

Never, until now, had he witnessed the going of anyone he specially cared for. He kept his teeth clinched on his grief. A fellow couldn't go around mournful, like a woman, telling folks how much he had liked John Harper, how much he missed him. There was nothing he could do except tell Bedrock. But even Bedrock wouldn't take up the job of hunting the killer. Nor could Young Hardesty himself leave his work. But he could keep his eyes open. Some day, maybe, he would hear of a bullet so marked, or perhaps run across Harper's Winchester, which he would know because Harper's initials were branded on the stock. Also, Harper had put a thin strip of leather between the fore-end and the barrel, because the fore-end had shrunk in the heat and had become a little loose. A man might file the brand from the stock, but no one would think of looking under the fore-end.

Riding back to the homestead, Young Hardesty speculated on the identity of the murderer. Was he white man or Indian, horse thief, crazy man or just plain killer? There weren't many strangers in that region. Everybody knew everybody. Of course occasional strangers traveled through, riding chuck line, maybe punching cattle for a spell, then moving on. One of these wanderers might have killed Harper, shot him down to get possession of a rifle and grub, or in an argument, or just for plain meanness.

Young Hardesty approached the place cautiously. There were things to do—turn the cow and calf into pasture together, now that there was no one there to milk the cow. The horses could find enough grazing to keep them going until the sheriff came and took charge of things. As for the tomcat, there were plenty of rabbits in the brush. He would have to rustle for himself.

After attending to the animals, Young Hardesty went into the cabin. He wanted to have a last look at the old fiddle. He took it from the case, handled it a while and then drew the bow across the strings. He had never had the fiddle in his hands before. The harsh, rasping sound startled him. Hastily he put the fiddle back. Something was wrong with it. It didn't sound like that when John Harper played it.

As it was now too late to look for tracks, Young Hardesty rode across the ridge and down to the mine. After staking out his pony, he cooked supper, curled a cigarette, and sat staring across the evening desert. He felt lonesome. Bedrock was in Bowdry, probably would not return until the following day.

Hard knocks and experience had taught Young Hardesty to be practical. He blew the chaff from the day's gleaning and found that he had some real grain left. The murderer had stolen Harper's rifle, cartridges and provisions. Undoubtedly he had made for the high country. Only a fool would head out into the desert. The job was to find who had been prowling around in that section, and what he looked like. Somebody would see him. Was he on foot or horseback? There were no pony tracks near the cabin. Perhaps he had left his horse in the brush and come down to the homestead on foot.

Young Hardesty surmised that the killer hadn't fired at him when he first rode over to Harper's cabin because he wanted to see what he would do. If he went into the cabin he would discover the murder.

"I went in," reflected Young Hardesty. "When I came out and started for Grant he took a crack at me. One thing, he was too far off to see what I looked like. Mebby he didn't take another crack at me because he *was* on foot and couldn't head me off."

If there was such a man prowling around, he would be looking to steal a horse. In that case it might be just as well to keep an eye on Shingles.

Ordinarily Young Hardesty would never have thought of taking his rifle, but the day's events had set his nerves on edge. He started up the trail back of the mine, plodding along quietly, pausing as he came to the edge of the meadow. Finally he discerned the outline of his pony in the dim starlight. Shingles was acting queer—repeatedly rubbing his nose on his foreleg. It was too cool for flies. Young Hardesty had begun to cross the meadow when he stopped and cocked the Sharp's.

"Just what you tryin' to do with that horse?" he called out.

"Hello there! Didn't hear you coming. He's tangled in the rope. I'll have him loose in a minute." The voice was unfamiliar, but the man spoke in a natural manner.

"I'll take care of him." Slowly Young Hardesty moved toward the other, already suspicious of his intent.

"Got his foot loose now," said the stranger. "I saw your fire from up above. I was coming down the trail when I heard your horse stomping and snorting. That's the how of it."

IT WASN'T all the how of it Young Hardesty wanted. What was this man doing in the mountains on foot? Moreover, Shingles was rope-wise. Never had he been know to get tangled in his stake rope. Keeping the Sharp's on the man, Young Hardesty drew near enough to distinguish his build and size.

"I notice you're packin' a gun," said the stranger easily.

"I notice you're afoot."

"Yes, damn the luck. My horse slipped on the trail and broke his leg, over the other side of the hill."

"Where you headed?"

"Kid, I'm headed for the first place I can get some grub. Haven't ate nothing since yesterday noon."

Still suspicious, Young Hardesty decided that he wanted to get one good look at the stranger in the firelight. "Come on down to the mine. Reckon I can rustle up somethin'."

For a second the stranger seemed to hesitate.

"Straight on down," said Young Hardesty. He didn't intend to let the other get behind him.

The fellow rustled wood for the fire and offered to cook his own meal. Young Hardesty cut some bacon and put the coffee pot on. Meanwhile he had a chance to size up his visitor.

The man's overalls were torn as though by brush. He had not shaved for several days. He had no rifle or six gun. He wore flat-soled shoes, instead of the customary riding boots. His black felt hat was battered and shapeless. In town he would have been called a bum. Yet he acted like a man well fed and sure of himself. He implied that he was a cowhand out of a job. He didn't say where he came from or where he was going. His only plaint was that he was dead for a smoke.

Young Hardesty gave him tobacco and papers.

"Did you leave your rig with your horse?" he said.

"Yes. The old hull wasn't worth packing along."

The stranger was squatting by the fire, eating supper, apparently feeling very much at home. Young Hardesty said he would step up to the meadow and stake his horse to fresh grazing. He indicated Bedrock's cot. "You can bush there. My pardner's gone to Bowdry. If he shows up while I'm changing the pony, just tell him I'll be back right soon. He's like to show up most any time now."

"You young fellows working the mine together?"

"He ain't young. He's old, and saltier 'n hell."

The stranger laughed. "I'll be right glad to meet him."

To see to his pony was an excuse to get by himself and think things over. Young Hardesty also wanted to give the stranger a chance to light out. A chuckline rider or a tramp wouldn't leave a good bed unless he wanted to make a getaway. Young Hardesty climbed the trail slowly, puzzled by the other's easy manner. What could be done about sleeping, if the man didn't light out? If he was a killer he wouldn't hesitate to bump off a young fellow keeping camp alone. Young Hardesty wished heartily that Bedrock was in camp.

To add to his growing suspicion, Young Hardesty discovered that his pony had moved far from where he had originally been staked. It began to look as if the man had been about ready to steal the pony. It wasn't an agreeable prospect Young Hardesty faced when he returned to the mine, but he had made his plans.

"Notice my horse was loose," he said, wishing that the other hadn't let the fire die down.

"Doggone if I didn't forget to tie him again." The stranger's tone was apologetic. "He was tangled so bad I had to untie the long end of the rope to get him loose."

Young Hardesty seemed quick to accept the explanation. "Even if he was loose, he ain't hard to catch."

"Looks like a good little horse."

"He'll do. One thing, he's fast. You wouldn't think it, but I've known him to outrun a rifle shot."

"That's better than I can do," said the man, laughing. "Reckon I'll turn in."

There was no getting under the hide of the stranger. He didn't get sore at anything, he was quick with his answers, and his face never changed expression. Young Hardesty concluded that his suspicions were running away with him. Nevertheless he took his blankets from the cot beside Bedrock's and packed them to the mine. He also took his Sharp's. The stranger made no comment, merely rolled in, and apparently, was soon fast asleep.

YOUNG HARDESTY didn't sleep a wink. All night he lay on his blankets, fighting the desire to sleep, watching the cot where the stranger lay. Up at daybreak, Young Hardesty felt tough and irritable. His unwelcome guest rustled wood and got breakfast. He seemed a good hand around camp, knowing by instinct where things were. After breakfast he borrowed Bedrock's razor and shaved.

His beard gone, he looked nothing like a criminal. To the contrary, he was rather good looking, stood squarely on his feet, smiled readily and moved about with alertness. There was nothing furtive about him. Only one thing now bothered Young Hardesty: The man's eyes were not right. It was difficult to say just what was wrong with them, except that they were too full and bright. Bright on the surface, Young Hardesty noted, but with no expression coming through from inside.

"Your pardner didn't show up," said the stranger, as he cleared away the breakfast dishes.

Young Hardesty was on his guard. He wanted the man to talk. Then there might be a chance of tripping him.

"Most like he'll roll in any time now," said Young Hardesty easily. "Sometimes he stops by at John Harper's—at the homestead yonder." Young Hardesty gestured toward the south.

"Thought you said your pardner had gone to Bowdry?"

"I did." Young Hardesty felt as if he were setting a bear trap with an exceedingly fine trigger.

"Funny he'd chouse on past the mine —and then turn back."

"That's why I said he might show up any minute. My pardner aimed to pack some grub to Harper, cuttin' across from Bowdry to the homestead, which is just about as short as comin' here first and then foggin' on down to Harper's." Young Hardesty watched the stranger like a terrier watching a cat on a fence. "Harper was sick. He couldn't go for grub himself."

The stranger nodded. "I reckon I got kind of mixed up in my bearings. It's the first time I've been up in this country."

There was a hard glint in Young Hardesty's eye. The man hadn't exactly put his foot in the trap, but he had come mighty near getting a finger caught. If he didn't know the country, how did he know Bowdry was north of the mine—that Bedrock would have to pass the mine to get to the homestead?

To hang round and watch the stranger all day was not to Young Hardesty's liking. Moreover, he wanted to ride over to Harper's and search for tracks. Should he tell the man where he was going, or simply say he was going to hunt deer? Young Hardesty decided to say where he was going, and see how the stranger took it.

"If you're dyin' to work," said Young Hardesty, "there's plenty loose ore in the tunnel where we put that last shot. It ain't hard to locate the wheelbarrow and a shovel."

When Young Hardesty reached the low ridge south of the mine he reined up and looked back. The man came out of the mine shoving a wheelbarrow load of ore. He dumped it and returned to the tunnel.

"Figures I'm watching him," commented Young Hardesty. "I told him I'd be at Harper's mebby two or three hours. When I'm out of sight he'll quit workin' and light a shuck over the hill."

Down to the homestead and on past the empty cabin rode Young Hardesty. On the hillside from which the shot had been fired at him he dismounted and led his horse as he searched for signs of the man that did the shooting. Presently he came upon the tracks of flat-soled shoes. Farther along he found an empty forty-four shell. The tracks, barely visible, turned and followed a ridge that led toward the high country. If he could complete the loop—trail the man up to the crest and round down to the mine—Young Hardesty felt that his suspicions would be well founded.

HE RODE on through the the heavy brush, struck into a narrow canon and finally emerged on the crest of the range. In the timber the moccasin-like tracks showed plainer, were easier to follow. They were now leading north along the crest. Young Hardesty followed them until he saw where they turned and trailed down the hillside toward the mine. He was pondering as to whether he had best ride directly down to the mine and accuse the stranger of the murder, or return by way of the homestead, when he saw a black hat bobbing along the trail toward the spring below. The stranger had quit work and was on his way up the mountain. Keeping out of sight, Young Hardesty watched him swing along the crest, stop and gaze round, then strike swiftly over the range down its western side. Was he leaving the country? He had no supplies with him, had taken nothing from the mine camp. And why had he waited so long before he left? All he had to do was to have said that morning that he was going.

Now that he was gone, what was the best thing to do? Take after him, hold him up, tell him he had murdered John Harper—and then, if he showed fight, blow a hole through him? Young Hardesty felt that he still lacked enough evidence to go that far. Yet he didn't want the man to get away, now that he had actually left the mine.

Young Hardesty was surprised when the stranger reappeared, coming swiftly up the western slope of the range. He was even more surprised when he saw that the stranger now carried a rifle. For a moment the man in the tattered black hat stood on the crest looking around. Then, at a swift pace he started down the hill toward the mine.

"He's goin' to lay in the brush and knock us off comfortable," speculated Young Hardesty, as the stranger left the trail and disappeared. But in a minute or so he reappeared without the rifle. He walked swiftly on down to the mine flat. Young Hardesty saw him dump a load of ore from the wheelbarrow and start to work.

Young Hardesty decided to circle back to the homestead and from there cross over to the mine, that the stranger might not suspect he had been up on the ridge watching. Once back at the mine Young Hardesty would keep a mighty wide eye on him. If a chance offered, he would slip up to the spring and locate the rifle. If it were John Harper's Winchester, that would just about settle it.

When Young Hardesty arrived at the mine the stranger was rustling the noon meal. He acted as natural as ever, but it struck Young Hardesty as queer that the other didn't ask how he had found things at the homestead. Young Hardesty's curiosity and suspicion had crystallized into hatred for the stranger and everything he did. Not for a second did Young Hardesty relax his vigilance. He did not allow the other to get behind him or too near him. Needing no excuse to go up the spring trail, Young Hardesty unsaddled his pony and led him up the hillside toward the meadow. As the pony stopped to drink at the spring, Young Hardesty noted that the stranger was coming up the trail with a water bucket. There would be no chance to look for the hidden rifle now, so Young Hardesty led his horse up to the meadow and staked him out.

"Come and get it!" said the stranger heartily as Young Hardesty returned to camp. "Beans, hot bread, coffee and peaches, if you ain't afraid of the belly-ache."

"I ain't worryin' any about my belly."

"Maybe about your pardner?"

"Ain't worryin' about him, neither. Kind of queer he don't show up, though, seein' as there was no sign of him over to Harper's." Young Hardesty glanced at the ore pile. "I notice you been workin' that wheelbarrow most to death."

"Been at it all morning. Kind of stiffens your back when you ain't used to it."

"Now if it was your legs," Young Hardesty said, "I'd lay it to chousin' over the mountains on foot."

The other's full, bright eye was expressionless. "From now on I'm sticking to the flat country, unless I get me a mount."

Young Hardesty gestured to the desert below. "There's plenty of it." Meanwhile he was looking at the stranger's shoes. The heels were worn down level with the soles. Those shoes had made the tracks he had been following nearly all morning. But could the smooth-faced, bright-eyed and easy going man sitting opposite him eating dinner, actually be the murderer? One minute Young Hardesty was hot to say yes, but he couldn't quite do it. There were too many queer circumstances connected with the stranger's arrival in the country.

THE meal finished, Young Hardesty took a dollar from his pocket. "Match you to see who washes up the dishes." He won the toss. That left him free to do as he pleased, but he felt that he needed no excuse to again go up the spring trail. Young Hardesty deliberately backed into the full water bucket, upsetting it. "Hell of a note!" He picked up the empty bucket. This time he

would locate that rifle, stranger or no stranger.

The ground round the spring was soft. There was no difficulty in following the flat-soled tracks into the brush. Behind the huge rock near the spring lay the rifle. Before Young Hardesty picked it up he knew that it was Harper's. On the stock was a small neat brand, J. H.

The back of Young Hardesty's neck grew hot. He glanced at the fore-end, under which was a thin strip of leather. Swiftly he emptied the magazine and thrust the cartridges into his pocket. The man down below, washing dishes and whistling as he worked, was the murderer of John Harper.

Young Hardesty's first impulse was to take the rifle down to camp and ask the stranger where he got it. However, that might start a fight. Young Hardesty had packed his Sharp's around with him wherever he went, never leaving it out of reach. He imagined the other was beginning to notice it. If the stranger should happen to jump him before he could use the Sharp's, Young Hardesty knew he wouldn't have a chance. The man was stocky, quick, and fifty or sixty pounds heavier. Then again, if challenged about the rifle, the stranger might claim he had found it.

Young Hardesty decided it wouldn't do to show his hand yet. Just let the stranger make a wrong move. Then would be time enough to settle things, once and for all.

"Thought you must have bogged down at the spring," said the stranger as Young Hardesty came lugging the water bucket.

"No. Run onto a rattler, up by the spring."

"Kill him?"

"No. Just pulled his fangs and let him go."

For the first time since his arrival the stranger began to show signs of uneasiness. The strain of watching had become so great that Young Hardesty felt he couldn't stand it much longer. He glanced toward the distant desert. There was no sign of Bedrock on the trail. Bedrock might have been delayed, might not show up for another day or so.

Young Hardesty had been called foolhardy. Always he was curious. Now, his taut nerves demanded relaxation. He wanted to have this miserable job done and over with. While evidence showed that the stranger was guilty, he had been nothing but friendly while at the mine. What was he, a murderer or an innocent man? Did he intend to do more killing, or simply steal the pony and get away? While realizing he was taking a long chance, Young Hardesty determined to find out.

Strolling over to the mine tunnel, he took a rod and cloth and began to clean his rifle. To do so he had to unload it. But that was all right. He wasn't going to make his experiment on the stranger with a loaded gun. The stranger was stacking the dinner dishes. When Young Hardesty had finished cleaning the Sharp's he stood it against the tunnel wall, unloaded. Deliberately he got up and loafed over to the table.

Casually the stranger finished his work, casually he strolled over to the mine tunnel. When Young Hardesty turned round the other had the Sharp's in his hands.

"Thought so!" breathed Young Hardesty. The stranger cocked the rifle, swung it here and there. The rifle was empty, but still Young Hardesty's back grew cold. Was the other man simply toying with the rifle, or did he mean business.

"How far will she carry with this sawed-off barrel?" said the stranger.

"I dunno." Young Hardesty tried to appear at ease. "But you can hear her clear to the sheriff's office."

Slowly the Sharp's swung round, its short, ugly muzzle centered on Young Hardesty. If the hammer fell he would make a dash for the spring and John

Harper's Winchester. If the stranger followed, he'd get his head blown off.

For a few seconds the stranger held the rifle on Young Hardesty. Then, with a laugh, he uncocked it and stood it against the tunnel wall.

"Just wanted to see if you had any nerve," he said, walking to Bedrock's cot and stretching out.

"Hell of a way to find out!" said Young Hardesty. His experiment had left him in a worse predicament than ever. He couldn't figure out what the stranger was up to. How long did he intend to hang around camp? What was he up to? Was he waiting for Bedrock to show up? If so, why? Young Hardesty's neck tingled. The stranger, lying on the cot, his hat tilted over his eyes was laughing softly to himself. Why, the man was loco! A crazy man. If he hadn't been he would have dug out long ago. Worse than a rattler. You could almost always tell what a rattler would do. But a crazy man—Young Hardesty was sitting near the tunnel, the Sharp's within easy reach. The rifle was not unloaded now.

The man on the cot made a cigarette, lay smoking and apparently gazing up at the sky. How could a human stand the sun in his eyes like that? What would be the outcome of this vigil? Something would happen. Things could not go on this way.

From watching the still figure on the cot Young Hardesty's gaze turned to the desert below. He wanted to shout with relief. Far down the Bowdry trail came a man and a pack burro. In a half hour or so Bedrock would arrive. He could handle the stranger in a fight, tie him and hold him at the mine until the sheriff came. That would be better than shooting the man down. The sheriff could collect enough evidence to hang him. Hoping that the stranger would fall asleep and not waken until Bedrock arrived, Young Hardesty sat watching, first the man on the cot, then the distant tiny figure. Bedrock was coming! But would the old man arrive before something happened?

THE hot sun poured down on the mine flat. In spite of his watchfulness Young Hardesty began to feel drowsy. Bedrock and the burro were nearer now. Presently the stranger glanced toward Young Hardesty who seemed to be half asleep.

"Your pardner ain't showed up yet," he stated.

Young Hardesty was on his guard.

"Not yet," he replied drowsily.

"I reckon he's boss around here."

"He's half boss when we're both here. Right now I'm whole boss."

"I'd like to trade you out of that horse of yours." The stranger lay back, gazing at the sky.

"I reckon the sun has kind of blinded you. What you got to trade?" Young Hardesty deliberately made conversation to hold the stranger's attention. In a few minutes Bedrock would arrive.

"I'll give you ten dollars for him."

Young Hardesty forced a laugh. "Make it forty and I'll listen to you." He knew that if the other had forty dollars he wouldn't be afoot.

"That's high for a rabbit like him."

"Mebbyso. But you ain't seem him run yet."

"Plenty of time for that," said the stranger. He lay back, his hat over his eyes. Young Hardesty wondered how a man could take it easy like that, after killing someone.

The patter of hoofs on the trail just below the mine roused the stranger. He sat up.

"My pardner," said Young Hardesty, gesturing.

Bedrock and burro poked into camp. The old man greeted Young Hardesty casually, nodded toward the stranger. It was half greeting, half question.

"This fella," said Young Hardesty, "drifted into camp yesterday. He was

afoot, and out of grub. Says he lost his horse over the other side of the mountain. I told him to sit and feed up."

"That's the how of it," said the stranger, his full eyes fixed on the gigantic figure of Bedrock.

"Make yourself to home," said Bedrock. "Son, lend a hand and we'll unpack."

Bedrock and Young Hardesty set to work. The stranger sauntered over toward the mine tunnel. Young Hardesty seized the opportunity to tell Bedrock about the killing of John Harper, the marked bullet, and the tracks of flat-soled shoes from the ridge back of the homestead up to the crest and down to the mine.

"Sure as hell he done it!" concluded Young Hardesty.

"Could you prove it to the sheriff, son?"

"Prove it! That fella has got Harper's Winchester cached up by the spring, right now!"

Bedrock loosed the pack rope. "Reckon I better talk to him. Where is he, right now?"

"Why he's—" Young Hardesty's gaze swept the mine flat. The stranger had disappeared. Young Hardesty at once thought of his pony. A good look at Bedrock had put the fear of God into the stranger. He was making his getaway. But he wasn't going to make it on Young Hardesty's horse! The boy started up the mine trail.

"Better stay right where you are!" The stranger stood just within the brush, Harper's Winchester in his hands. He smiled at Young Hardesty's startled exclamation. It was an evil smile. "So I killed that hay-tosser over yonder, did I? You thought I didn't hear you talking to your pardner, eh? Thought you had me? Well, guess again." The glare in his eyes chilled Young Hardesty, even though he knew the Winchester was not loaded.

"Smart boy, ain't you? Well, you get it first!"

SOLID, still as a mountain, Bedrock stood near the burro, the end of the loosened pack rope in his hand.

"Don't shoot the boy," he said quietly. "Like as not he's just imaginin' things."

"Don't you worry any about me," said Young Hardesty. "He ain't goin' to shoot anybody."

But old Bedrock, covered by a rifle in the hands of a killer—the old man did not know that the man's rifle was empty—paid no heed to his young partner. Fearful for the boy, he snatched his own rifle from beneath the loosened pack rope.

"Don't shoot!" cried Young Hardesty. "His gun ain't—" Bedrock's rifle crashed. With a look of surprise, a gasp, the stranger slumped down, the empty rifle clattering on the ground at his feet. He had tried for Bedrock. The hammer of John Harper's Winchester clicked on an empty chamber just as Bedrock fired.

The old man stood looking down at the motionless body. Young Hardesty's face was white, but there was a hard glint in his dark eyes. Bedrock picked up Harper's Winchester, glanced down at the brand on the stock, threw the lever down. Only then did he realize that the gun was empty. He shook his head. He had expected to get hit at least once before he got the killer.

"It's Godamighty's jedgment," he said slowly.

"Mebbyso." Young Hardesty wasn't going to argue about that. "But it was me took the shells out of that rifle." He felt queer. Bedrock had taken a long chance. Why, that killer could have shot him twice over, if the rifle had been loaded. Bedrock had taken a long chance—not to square up for the murder of John Harper, but to keep his

partner from getting killed. Young Hardesty wanted to say what he felt about it, but he couldn't bring himself to speak.

Bedrock must have realized that the boy was having a struggle with himself, for he said gently, "Take it easy son. Godamighty had it all figured out. It was for me to do. I didn't ask for it."

Young Hardesty began to feel that he had done some figuring himself. But it was no use arguing with Bedrock about Godamighty. That was a mountain a fellow couldn't get behind to see what was on the other side.

"I reckon," said Bedrock, "we better tidy up around camp."

Young Hardesty nodded. Things had to go on, regular, even though John Harper was dead and his murderer lay face to the sky near the mine tunnel. Even though the homestead cabin was empty, and John Harper's work gone for nothing, things would go on. Someday somebody maybe, would come along and take up his work where he left off. But if Bedrock had been shot, who would have taken his place? Bedrock, now laying a piece of tarp over the dead man. A fellow might believe like Bedrock, or he might not, but somehow you just had to have something solid to tie to. Young Hardesty took the water bucket and started toward the spring. The evening shadows were lengthening. Soon it would be time to eat.

LONG after supper, as the partners sat gazing out across the desert below, Young Hardesty decided to tell Bedrock, right out plain, what he thought about the chance he had taken, and how much he really liked and respected him. But he couldn't do it. Only women and kids said those kind of things. Anyhow, real partners didn't have to talk to each other like that.

"What's on your mind, son?"

With a start Young Hardesty came to himself. "Mebby John, and how we got to tell the sheriff. He'll be comin' along down to Grant, pretty soon. Bridges wrote a letter to him. Sent it in by the half-breed. In the mornin' I'm goin' up on top and look for that cache. Sure as hell that fella had some of John's grub cached up there. I want to show the sheriff."

Bedrock nodded. "I was thinking about John's woman coming. We're about the only friends John had, out here. We got to talk to her. That will be kind of tough."

"Do you reckon that fella yonder was loco?"

"Must have been. Sometimes killers get that way. From what you tell, he didn't use plain horse sense."

Somehow, Young Hardesty's hatred for the killer had evaporated. You couldn't blame a crazy man any more than you could a mad dog. Neither of them knew what they were doing. And this man, why, the sheriff would come, take a look at him and probably say, "You better get busy with your shovels, boys." And that would be the end of it. No one would know who the killer was, where he came from. Probably the peace officers wouldn't even take the trouble to find out his name. He was dead. John Harper was dead. Most folks would say that squared things. You wouldn't stick a board over the grave of a man like that, and say on it, "The man that killed John Harper." No use rubbing it in. Folks would soon forget about John Harper. If anybody did happen to remember, why they'd say that the fellow that did it was a stranger.

Young Hardesty's eyes were fixed on the far desert reaches. It was evening—about eight o'clock. It was the time John Harper would have been through working. Young Hardesty could almost hear the lank homesteader sawing away on his fiddle.

PURSUIT

By

ARED WHITE

PILOT JIM FALK'S face quickened as he tore open the telegram and read. When he looked up a smile sparkled in his gray eyes, effacing a touch of weariness that had been there a few minutes before as he put his ship down at Newark after his long grind for Intercoastal Airways.

"It's from my old pursuit squadron," he told the dispatcher. "They want me to meet them in the big town tonight."

"Nothing in your way before tomorrow," the dispatcher said. "Hope it isn't a binge."

Falk got a lift through the tube, had dinner at a cafe and reported to McKinstry's office on the fortieth floor of a downtown building. Falk had been absent on the Pacific Coast at the last squadron reunion and the one before that he had been trail-blazing in Central America. Last Armistice Day he had spent in New York, but the old pursuit squadron had its own good reason for ignoring Armistice Day. The timing of this telegraphed summons suggested

He drove his own craft down.

to Falk that the present gathering must have been arranged for his special benefit.

A dozen were in McKinstry's offices when Falk entered. His quick eye recognized them over McKinstry's broad shoulders. McKinstry, the squadron commander, five of the old pilots, two medicos and some ground officers who had been taken into the fold since the war.

"Our old ace-in-the-hole!" McKinstry greeted him, wringing Falk's hand. "But we'd begun to think you'd given us the air for good, Jim."

Falk smiled embarrassment at the attention he received and looked from one to the other with a mumbled word or two. His round, gray eyes beamed a friendliness, a depth of feeling for his war-time comrades, that couldn't have been put in words, even had Falk been the most talkative instead of the most silent of men. When someone came forward with a highball, he shook his head. A more communicative man might have explained that, no longer being a young eagle, he was keeping himself in the pink by exacting care. And somehow, his gesture communicated that thought. That was the way with Falk; his moods and thoughts transmitted themselves to his own kind without formality of speech, which saved him from the solitude of most silent men.

McKinstry motioned everyone to a chair and sat down, observing Jim Falk over the rim of a highball. A constraint settled over all. Falk felt a dozen pairs of eyes centered upon him in a humor that he was conscious of without understanding. His own face sobered in response to the mood of the room. His eyes seemed to ask, without definite change of expression, what was up.

"We've had an interesting letter from Keller," McKinstry said presently, setting his drink on a desk. His voice lacked the casual effect McKinstry tried to put into it. "If you haven't heard it, Keller is an air adviser for the rebels in the Spanish brawl. Both sides have been using quite a few American planes."

Jim Falk nodded, which conveyed the thought that he knew all about this. McKinstry very deliberately lighted a cigarette and, through a puff of grayish smoke, said to Falk, "Keller tells us that our old friend Baron von Goerz is flying for the Dons—on the rebel side. Keller says he sees Von Goerz every few days in a cafe at Burgos—and we were all remembering that so far as Von Goerz is concerned there's been no armistice, Jim."

Under the stress of feeling that visibly swept Jim Falk at these words, a more volatile man might have leaped to his feet with an oath. But Falk sat very still, the blood draining slowly from his wind-burned cheeks. His eyes were fixed intently upon McKinstry, yet he said nothing.

McKinstry said quietly, "We thought, Jim, unless you object, we'd draw lots tonight—that is, the four of you who are qualified to meet Von Goerz."

"It was my date, Major," Falk said in a level voice, without waiting. "It still is."

There was a long, tense silence. Falk sat looking at McKinstry, though without seeing him. His face relaxed finally and he got up, forcing a smile. The others grouped about him, wrung his hand in silence that was more eloquent than words. All left except McKinstry, who handed Jim a bulky envelope.

"I knew what you'd say, Jim," McKinstry said. "It's your party, and I knew you'd allow no one to take it over. You'll find everything you need here—passports, funds, instructions. Everything is down in detail. Keller will take care of you if you go to Burgos. Our old friend Broulliet is technical air man for the Madrid government. And I'm sure Broulliet can get you fixed up with something like a P-26. If Intercoastal doesn't want you when you hit back in

the U. S., we'll land you something better. Von Goerz has had a lot of experience lately, but so have you—and he's playing that same old game of wine and women. The odds ought to even out in your favor, Jim."

JIM FALK nodded and returned McKinstry's handclasp, then went to the elevator and down into the street. Without conscious volition he got a taxicab to take him to Newark. His eyes were set ahead of him, oblivious to externals, intent upon the scenes that welled out of a stark memory of nearly two decades ago.

There was young Wheeldon before his eyes again. Wheeldon, Jim Falk's protegé, junior pilot of the squadron, going up for his first adventure over the western front. Over Cunel, Wheeldon had tangled, been shot down in a squadron dog-fight, had taken to his parachute, an innovation at that time. Falk had seen what happened, but had been unable to disengage himself from a fight of his own in time to prevent it. A plane had swooped down to turn its guns on the helpless Wheeldon, rip apart his 'chute, riddle his young body with lead while he hung helpless from his parachute.

It was Von Goerz. His plane was recognized; he confessed the act in the series of dropped messages that were exchanged between hostile airmen over the incident. Von Goerz pleaded that he had obeyed standing orders in shooting down a parachute, but he accepted the American challenge, agreed to meet Falk over Cunel, no quarter to be given. Date was set—but one day too late. The armistice intervened. What on the morning of November 11 would have been acclaimed glorious valor, on the following day would have been murder.

The squadron silently cursed the armistice, sullenly moped through the day, vowed over their cognac never to celebrate an armistice day until Von Goerz had been attended to. Jim Falk returned to civil life, and the war, Von Goerz, young Wheeldon, faded slowly into memories. Yet, without dwelling upon the thought too far, Falk had always thought one day he would meet Von Goerz. Perhaps as a fellow pilot in American aviation. Well, in that event, the matter would have to be patched up somehow, the old vow of armistice night called off. After all, war hates belonged to a mad past; the world had licked its wounds and picked up the tangled threads of normal existence.

But those words of McKinstry had torn the scar over an old wound. Von Goerz was still in the air, behind machine guns, dealing death, living in the lust of red adventure that had taken him wherever there was human toll to be had. Falk was not puzzled at that. He understood the offensive spirit, the restlessness under inaction that goes with it. But what with Falk, a few minutes before, had been a bitter memory, now was a burning reality, an actuality of flesh and blood that revived within him irresistibly the ancient score, revitalized the squadron's vow.

Circumstance had broken that date with Von Goerz. Now circumstance had renewed the challenge. Von Goerz flying over Madrid with rebel squadrons was Von Goerz over Cunel. In his breast Falk felt the burning of that old offensive spirit—the will to fight, the spirit to search out battle, to carry on, once engaged, to the finish. Even the text books put it like that, still do. Only the pilot with the spirit of attack can succeed; while knowing prudence he must have a total disregard of danger.

JIM FALK checked out from Newark with a month's leave from Intercoastal Airways, caught a night boat that took him to Le Havre, made a prearranged French agency contact in Paris that

put him in Bordeaux the following night and over the frontier at Hendaye by plane the next. His Spanish passports, provided in France, stamped him a skilled aviator wanting service with the hard-ridden Spanish government. These papers, coming from sympathetic French sources, gave him the play of Madrid, a military auto to speed him to the air ministry, where he reported to Broulliet.

"Vive Dieu, but it is my ancient good friend, Lieutenant Jeem Falk!" Broulliet exclaimed, seizing Falk by the two shoulders and kissing him soundly on either cheek. "*Oui,* the *petit* falcon himself!"

Broulliet, Falk noted, was older, and gray, but with the same old effervescent spirit of bygone days, when he was mentor to McKinstry's American eaglets. Falk asked to see Broulliet alone and, when French amenities had exhausted themselves, he drove to business.

"I want to do your government a service—but chiefly on our own account, *monsieur,*" Falk said. "Can you let me have a one-seater, modern and fast, equipped with good guns? For a very few days, only."

"But, yes, my ancient friend!" Broulliet exclaimed, when his heavy brows knotted over piercing black eyes. "But why it is you say—for a very few days? The war"—he shrugged his shoulders—"it have barely begun!"

"Some unfinished business, *monsieur,* of my old squadron," Falk said bluntly. "I had a date with Baron von Goerz, but the armistice cut in. This is the first chance I've had to keep it."

M. Broulliet's restless eyes searched Falk's face. He asked no question, his alert mind seeming swiftly to fill in the gaps, answer his questions. Shortly he began pacing back and forth across the large, vaulted room of the ministry that had been allotted him for his military quarters. He halted abruptly in front of Falk.

"It is difficult," he said, in his precise, metallic English. "*Oui,* I understand, *monsieur.* I sympathize. But to find the Herr Baron, it is difficult. He is but one man in a hundred of that rebel carrion, one plane in maybe twice the hundred. Do you comprehend, my friend?"

"We had that figured out," Falk said. "But I mean to fix things up with Von Goerz first."

"Ah, but twice *difficile!*" Broulliet rejoined. "You speak little Spanish, you carry no passports. You present yourself in the enemy lines and—poof—it is *fini!*"

"I have a friend over in Burgos named Keller," Falk explained. "I also have passports good in their capital. If you'll drop me over, I'll do the rest, *monsieur.*"

Broulliet crossed the room to the door and stood with his ear to the panel. Satisfying himself there was no eavesdropper, he returned, invited Falk to a chair. The Frenchman was cautious, intent on safeguarding himself against embarrassment. The Spanish, he said, were very suspicious. But Falk hung on, laid his cards face up on the table, argued that it should be worth the risk of a plane just to have done with the German fighting ace.

"But yes, for that scoundrel's hide I will agree, my good friend," Broulliet yielded at last. "It is also for what you call the good old days. *Voila!* But you must be very discreet. Ze Spanish—they are very difficult!"

Until night Falk remained in Broulliet's quarters, glad enough to have sanctuary. Out in the streets milled a strange rabble, pinched, cold, faces cast in that grim strain of war madness. From time to time the building shook lightly in the wake of a heavy detonation. Broulliet, busy at his desk with maps and papers, or scurrying in and out of the room for conferences with Spanish military officers, was completely absorbed in his work, did not seem conscious of the de-

struction that came from the skies, released from the flashing bellies of enemy bombers.

To Falk the roar of aerial bombs, the bedlam of the anti-aircraft, seemed only an echo of those other days. He seemed to be living again back of Cunel, a pursuit pilot with his old squadron. There were no intervening years. He found himself half expecting a summons from McKinstry to take the air on some exacting mission, or waiting for the moment to set out over Cunel to meet young Von Goerz in combat.

Broulliet's voice broke his thoughts. The Frenchman had ordered supper brought in. They talked over their meal, of the old days of the grand fracas in France, the Frenchman voluble, Falk a sympathetic listener. With his champagne, Broulliet confided that he'd been in Madrid for many months, since the Spanish civil war began. It was all very discouraging, since the trained troops were the rebels and the Government must depend upon raw levies. His final liqueur brought the Frenchman to a whispered confidence, close to Falk's ear.

"As for Von Goerz, it is that we have a special grievance for him, Monsieur Jeem!" he said. "Three of my good comrades, they have come down—plop! *Oui*, it is that Von Goerz identifies himself by that silver dagger piercing the black heart, which was paint on his plane on the Western Front. But also it is that the scoundrel have a charm life. If you kill Von Goerz, *monsieur*, my gratitude it shall be very great!"

A glance at his wrist watch and Broulliet leaped to his feet. A rasp of his call button brought into the room a trim young Frenchman in Spanish uniform. It was Capitan Montrichard, Broulliet said, a trusted flier who would put Falk down back of Burgos under cover of darkness.

El Capitan Montrichard had a black military car waiting in the patio. He sped Falk through Madrid to the distant airdrome and took off in a two-seater to the east over the Sierra de Guadarrama towards Burgos. Two hours of fast flying through black skies followed before Montrichard gave the signal to jump. Falk let himself over the side, dropped into the black void below and pulled the ring of his chute. It was five minutes before he came to earth. Except for the gunflashes of a duel of heavy batteries on the skyline far behind him, there was thick darkness all about. Secreting his parachute and orienting himself by aid of the luminous dial of his compass, Falk set out for the Burgos outposts.

He came shortly to a good road and marched some three kilometers when there rang out the sharp bark of the Spanish challenge.

"Quien vive!"

"Amigo Americano," Falk replied calmly.

The sentry advanced the nocturnal visitor to the point of this bayonet and summoned a *sargento*, who examined Falk's passports by flashlight. These papers requested in Spanish that the bearer be escorted at once to headquarters for conference with Señor Keller, of the staff of the supreme commander. The *sargento* summoned a *teniente* who sent word for his *capitan*. A *coronel* finally decided the matter and sent Falk into the unlighted city by coche de plaza, under escort.

BURGOS was as black as ink against the visit of Madrid bombers. Headquarters loomed up a huge black shadow in the Plaza de Alonzo Martinez, until they went inside, where there was bright lighting and a large concourse of staff officers and clerks busy over desks with the vast paper details of war, work that must go on day and night under the present stress of an attacking army. There were faces of many nationalities, technical advisers

from the four points of the compass, adventurers and mercenaries attracted by this armed violence that was racking a nation. Therefore the appearance of an American in civilian clothes attracted no special attention.

An alert *teniente* at the door questioned Falk's escort briefly and pivoted on booted heel to lead the way to an upper floor, where a door opened on a dozen trim young officers grouped about a portly man who sat at a broad walnut desk whose top was covered by a large battle map. Falk noted that the young officers were aviators, of mixed nationality. Spanish, German, Italian—two faces looked American. But more important, he saw that the portly man at the desk, in Spanish army uniform with the insignia of *commandante,* was Keller.

Keller looked up at the interruption, fixed his eyes upon Falk, and as recognition came, smiled lazily.

"My old friend Jim Falk," he said, casually, as if they had parted the day before rather than a dozen years back. He said something to the others in Spanish, at which all turned to Falk and saluted. "I just told them who you are, or used to be—the little falcon, a great ace. Make yourself at home, Falk, and in a minute we'll get to business."

Keller vouched for the newcomer, whereat Falk's Spanish escort left the room. Keller resumed his conference, ignoring his American visitor while he sketched over his map with a fat index finger, the while discoursing rapidly in Spanish. Falk guessed that Keller was laying down the plans of attack for a group of squadron commanders. An ace himself, Keller, in the world war, but now his tissues were flabby, his wings gone, and he was a man of the ground, directing the energies of the eaglets. A sad ending, Falk thought, for a man whose soul once held that rare spark of the true combat pilot. Yet the years did that to men, and Falk was reminded that his own wings soon would be fraying. Another few years and no amount of straight living and rigid conditioning could save him from the ground.

"Quien vive!" came the Spanish challenge.

The ace-who-was dismissed his battle conference, stood up to receive the parting salute of his pilots, and turned to Falk.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Jim," he said in the measured voice of a man who is little moved to surprise or undue exhilaration. "It's good to see you. But what brings you into this pleasant winter resort of the seven devils?"

"I want a favor, Keller," Falk said simply. "I want to talk to Baron von Goerz."

Keller's large blue eyes quietly searched Falk's face and he said, "If you're selling planes, Jim, I'm your man. Von Goerz is a squadron commander, with no authority. When I take snuff he has to sneeze in this little war."

"It's a personal matter, Keller," Falk said. "I'd rather not tell you about it, under the circumstances. It'll take only a few minutes with Von Goerz, and then I'd like to have you drop me back in Madrid."

Keller's eyes became quizzical.

"You lads wouldn't want to land me in a mess of trouble, would you, Jim?" he asked Falk.

"McKinstry said you're able to look out for yourself, Keller," Falk said, without flattery.

Keller nodded, his eyes sparkling, and said, "Maybe he's right, Jim. All right, tell the other lads I played the game, whatever it is you're up to. Let's see, I'll put it down that you're an American agent trying to sell me some good pursuit planes. I'll tell you I'll buy—and now you're leaving the country to make good the deal. Get that set-up, Falk? I'll stick to that story—and if you get in any mischief along the way, it'll be your own funeral. That'll be where I've got to protect my own hide. Get it?"

Keller summoned a military clerk, who searched through several card files before he reported to Keller in Spanish. The American promptly translated the information to Falk.

"Von Goerz is off duty at present," he said. "That means you'll find him messing with wine and a woman at the Café Suiza, which is in the Pasco del Espalón." Keller paused for a moment's thought, his mind working incisively in plotting the precise details of Falk's strange request. "I'll send you there with a young American aviator whom I can trust. He'll wait for you and drop you later by parachute wherever you want to be dropped."

"Thank you, Keller," Falk said and got up to extend his hand.

"But, damn it all, man," Keller complained, "you've got to promise to tell me some day what this is all about! In the meantime—*buenas noches*, and good luck!"

THE Café Suiza revealed its presence to the streets by the jangle of guitars, blare of cornets and the chatter of a piano. The roar of exploding bombs, wreaking Spanish vengeance on another section of the city, brought no rift to the jazz of the orchestra. The American aviator whom Keller had sent along, made no effort to break Falk's silence by asking questions.

In contrast with the grim streets outside, the somber sullenness of Madrid and Burgos, the inn reeked with the noises and abandoned gaiety of a syncopated binge. Officers, all in the Spanish uniform, but with faces of many nationalities, were dancing and drinking, talking noisily and singing. The women were Spanish, mostly with the deep black hair and large, flashing black eyes of their kind.

Jim Falk got a small table and ordered a bottle of *cerveza* which he had no intention of drinking. Casually he looked about, but with alert eyes that were searching with a covert intensity. Again an old scene. It might have been a French *estaminet*, back of Cunel. From the insignia, he saw that most of these military roisterers were airmen, back from their raids for a fling. At a table not a dozen feet away his eyes centered, found the object of their hunt, painstakingly measured a face, feature by feature. Unmistakably, it was Von Goerz.

The German ace was slumped in his chair, staring out across the room in evident boredom. His hand rested lightly on the stem of a champagne glass. He

lifted the glass to his lips with a slow, measured dignity. Beside him sat a girl of nineteen, her face flushed with wine and the excitement of the room. She was talking vivaciously, but without dissipating the Herr Baron's bored detachment.

There was frost in Von Goerz's black hair now, and his face was lined. Not severe lines. There were puffs under his eyes, a sagging at the neck, a suggestion of jowls, a relaxing of the corners of the mouth. He looked more the dissipated roué than the efficient killer.

But Jim Falk knew the mettle of the man, the grim motivation of his life. He knew that peace had never conquered the Von Goerz instinct for combat, that the German had flitted from war to war—one year in Poland, another in South America, again in the Orient—anywhere that he could indulge in his lust for human life, gain acclaim for his passion for slaughter, indulge the unconquered passions that had been born within him out of the crimson orgies of the Western Front. A man's life snuffed out in the afternoon, a woman and a bottle of wine for the evening. Falk had beard it said that such was the perfect day in the life of Baron von Goerz.

As he sat with eyes glued to Von Goerz, Falk wondered if Von Goerz had downed a plane today. But chiefly he was taking his measure of the man. The same age as himself, but not in the same physical fettle. Daily flying had kept Von Goerz' hand in the game, and given him practice with the throbbing machine guns that spat their death from between propeller blades. Well, Falk had done plenty of flying, and as for his marksmanship he'd have to leave that in the odds that favored his foeman.

For a matter of ten minutes Falk studied the other, then rose quietly and crossed to Von Goerz' table to say, in a quiet, measured voice, "Pardon, you are Captain von Goerz. Do you speak English?"

Von Goerz adjusted his rimless monocle with a leisurely arrogance and studied the intruder without change of expression.

"I am Captain von Goerz," he said dryly. "I speak English, when I am compelled to."

Their eyes clashed in the moment's silent appraisal.

Falk proceeded: "I am James Falk, lately Lieutenant Falk of the United States Army."

"I do not seem to remember you," Von Goerz rejoined with a touch of insolence.

"I had an appointment with you some years ago, for a meeting over Cunel, France."

"Cunel?" Von Goerz was puzzled. "Will you be good enough to come to whatever point you have?"

"You killed a man in a parachute, a friend of mine," Falk said with blunt directness, but with no hardening of his voice. "You were to give me satisfaction. The armistice interfered."

The puzzled look vanished in a slow moment from Von Goerz' face as his memory, searching back over the years of red adventure, placed the incident of the American in the falling parachute. A sparkle of interest shone in the depth of his bulbous gray eyes; he rose slowly to his feet and bowed very slightly.

"Ah, but I do remember," he said, and his lips moved in the shadow of a smile as he added, "The armistice was a bit premature, sir, for our purpose, wasn't it?"

Falk glanced at the Spanish girl, and asked Von Goerz, "Can I have a word with you, alone, Captain?"

The German ace looked at the girl and snapped a few words in Spanish that sent her away from the table. Then he invited Falk to sit down and offered him a glass of wine.

"Only a little wench—glad to be rid of her," Von Goerz said lazily, with a

shrug of his shoulders. His manner had changed to one of expectation, with a hint of inner amusement. He reminded Falk, "But now we are alone, *señor*."

Jim Falk said quietly, "I came here, Captain, to keep that date with you. I hope you will agree."

"That will please me very much," Von Goerz said, with a slow smile. His face clouded as he added, "But the details, if only they can be arranged."

"You name the place, Captain von Goerz, and the hour. I will be there, ready."

"But I see you have no uniform. You are not of our service. Just how, then, will—"

"I will be ready with my part, Captain."

Von Goerz debated briefly with himself; then he decided that this was no game of bluff, no whimsical exchange of words. His eyes brightened, a glow of color came to his cheekbones. He rose again as his mind shaped the details of his decision. Falk stood up.

"At noon of the day after tomorrow, my friend," Von Goerz said, an evident relish in his voice. "The place will be where you note the spires of a church at a point two miles south of the military crest of Cerro de Los Angeles which,, in turn, is nine miles south of Madrid. We will meet at 7000 meters altitude." He adjusted his monocle and bowed again, slightly. "It is important, my lieutenant, that you present yourself over the spires of the church at the precise moment."

"Thank you," Falk said, and returned to the waiting tartana.

WITH the first full light of the next morning Jim Falk's eyes beamed as they fell upon the single-seater fighting plane that Broulliet had provided him. Despite its unconventional color and markings, that sleek craft had a familiar look. Falk stepped back and guessed its overall span at twenty-eight feet, a trim, efficient machine from nose cowl to rudder fin.

He swung into the cockpit and his smile broadened. An American plane beyond the slightest doubt, even if there were no factory markings. His expert eye swung across the arrangement of instrument board in verification. Altimeter, indicator, engine gage, air speed, tachometer, clock super-charger gage. To the left of the pilot's seat, main line switch, voltmeter, ignition switch, starter pull.

Detail by detail he checked over the cockpit. Parking brake, running lights, fuel clock control, gun control switch, compass light rheostat, instrument lights rheostat, ammunition counters. Finally the name-plate, which was blank.

Falk put the craft in the air. Spic and span in its newness, accelerating easily, perfect in its balance and control. He swung over Madrid with its masses of buildings, hideously battle-pocked. The craft gave him the maximum of visibility and maneuverability and was a marvel of speed and climb. Throughout the day he kept the little fighting plane in the air. Twice, during his flights, while he reconnoitered for his place of rendezvous of the next day, Falk sighted Keller's big bombers, or small pursuit planes looking for trouble. But, though they stirred him with that old challange of the days back of Cunel, he avoided contact. His business was Von Goerz, that unfinished armistice of his eaglet days.

He put out a burst of machine-gun fire from time to time, not upon a target, but to test the mechanism of the .30 caliber weapon, to get the feel of fire as it poured its deadly metal between the blades of his propeller. The day fed his confidence, stripped away the years, gave him the feel of youth and adventure. And as for the plane, it was a P-26, no matter what the disguise. It was a plane with which he was familiar,

this sleek little wasp with its marvelous maneuverability.

Broulliet had him at quarters for breakfast the next morning. The Frenchman was visibly worried. Two days before Von Goerz had downed a young French ace, one of the most promising fighting men of the whole Government air force. Falk remembered the scene in the inn at Burgos. A taut smile passed his lips. Yes, that had been one of Von Goerz' perfect days.

HALF an hour before noon Falk took off, heading to the south to put his motors in top shape and get the feel of things. There was good visibility, no wind, and the sun was bright, but high enough not to be much of a factor in the fight. Jim Falk was in high fettle, cool, confident, the lust of conflict burning again in his veins.

A speck on the horizon caught Falk's eye as he flew within sight of the appointed spires of the church behind the Cerro de Los Angeles. His pulse rose as the speck shaped itself into a plane. Von Goerz was coming on the dot of time. They made a wary circle, to identify each other, then Von Goerz swooped forward in a straight line at full throttle with the spirit and fury of a bantam cock, intent upon coming swiftly to the issue.

But Falk was not ready for the grapple. Deliberately, from a discreet distance, he turned tail with a fast Immelman, as if his nerve had failed him at the last minute. Von Goerz roared after him, vaulting into the heavens in the hope of getting instantly on the American's tail from above.

Thereafter they circled about each other, darting in and out like two hawks seeking a vulnerable point of attack, moving steadily upward in climbing turns and vertical banks, Falk diving briefly from time to time to avoid proximity of the Von Goerz guns and slowly gain distance to the north. The German set a furious pace, hot for the final clash. His whole game was to get on a blind spot and fire from close range—a burst from his small gun at under one hundred feet range, poured direct into the body of his antagonist, from behind.

But if Jim Falk seemed to be dodging clear, constantly avoiding the issue, his mind was clinging to his own carefully planned game. He began gasping for air now, saw that they had been carried up above 15,000 feet in their goaded sorties. With a quick movement he thrust the liquid oxygen tube in his mouth, filled his lungs. For his own part he was not interested in getting on Von Goerz' blind spots. From one hundred fifty yards he began pecking away occasional bursts from his .30 caliber machine gun. The under surface of the Von Goerz wings was his target, or the fuselage under the pilot's seat.

Falk kept track of his fire, a rough mental estimate. Six hundred rounds he carried for his .30 gun. At 20,000 feet he was down to an estimated two hundred rounds. Still he was avoiding close range as the two ships circled upward towards the maximum limit of effective fighting operation. Coolly Falk estimated his situation, reckoning the final factors of the approaching crisis. Though his pulse was throbbing with the heat of battle, his mind was coldly calculating. Once his ammunition was gone he knew he would have to run for it. Rather than do that he meant, if forced to it, to close in at last, kill or get killed at close quarters.

At 25,000 feet he braced himself, pinched the adjusted lugs to pull in his safety belt. A hundred rounds left, he estimated. The German hawk banked and turned, but with a lessened verve and fury. Von Goerz was tiring from the furious pace. Jim Falk smiled grimly at the more sluggish flash of the German wings.

A hundred rounds left in the Falk

supply. And as Von Goerz made another frantic dash to close in, Falk released another burst of his high velocity missiles. In that goaded instant Falk's straining eye caught a rift, a slight, almost imperceptible rift in the smooth streaking flight of the German wasp. The climax that followed came with the quickness of a gunflash. A puff of smoke, a furious burst of yellowish flame.

Von Goerz responded with a side slip to keep that sudden inferno of his bullet-stricken tank out of his face until he could let himself over the side. Down he plummeted, coolly rejecting the ring of his parachute as his body plunged toward earth. Falk saw the German ship go into a flaming tail spin and swirl, now a comet of fire headed for earth. He drove his own craft down, following closely in the wake of the unseated Von Goerz.

AT 12,000 feet, where he could breathe, Von Goerz pulled the ring. His parachute opened out faithfully, stopped his dash. Falk caught up with him, circled close, close enough to observe the Von Goerz features. The German, expecting death, smiled nonchalantly. By some miracle of self-control he had retained the rimless monocle that fitted over his right eye. With that slow, arrogant dignity of his he lifted his right hand to his forehead, a salute of acknowledgment of his defeat, a gesture of disdain for the specter of death.

Falk waved back, then circled below. It stirred him for the moment, that bravado, stirred him that the man who had dealt death now laughed in the face of his own demise. But there was no thought in Jim Falk's mind of using his machine gun against the man in the parachute. His plan of battle had succeeded, miraculously; he was finished with Von Goerz. At 7000 feet, when he had completed his reconnoissance of the earth below, he swung away far to the north, kept Von Goerz in sight from a distance while he waited for the last tragic chapter.

The falling parachute appeared no larger to him now than a toadstool, Von Goerz a mere smudge under its silken folds. But it held Falk's eyes in a certain grim fascination. Seven thousand feet from earth, six thousand. A small white bell of smoke shaped itself under the parachute, a vindictive flash of color that seemed to come out of nothingness. Another splotch, then another.

The sky below suddenly became a mottled bedlam. From the distance came the savage bark of the anti-aircraft heavies. The federals, from the seeried slopes of the Cerro de Los Angeles, were raking the heavens with all the fury of impatient vengeance. One of those shrapnel spurts fastened itself against that distant toadstool. In a flash, Von Goerz' parachute was a thread of fire, moving like the tail of a comet behind its human plummet.

Jim Falk turned his eyes away and set his nose for the airdrome back of Madrid. Retribution for that violence over Cunel had overtaken Von Goerz in its own peculiar way, in the way Jim Falk had planned that it should. He dipped in salute of the ground batteries and hurried on.

"But," Broulliet pleaded an hour later at the airdrome in Madrid, "it is the command of a squadron we will present to you—and the rank of *commandante!* The fight with Von Goerz, it was magnifique—but there is greater glory for us, *mon ami!* In Madrid you will be the hero—please, you must not refuse!"

"Thanks," Falk said with quiet finality. "But the war's over now, as far as I'm concerned, and my old outfit at home is waiting to celebrate Armistice Day. Besides I'm due back on my old job, where there's a lot of useful flying to be done."

"If she wants the pill, gunner, toss it to her!"

NO PRIZE MONEY

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

THE sun, at end of a golden path, was dropping into the ocean. Noah Grannis straightened up from the grindstone near the galley, with a glance at William Tompkins, who was turning the stone for him. He glowered at the background hills and cliffs of Fayal. The September moon would be almost at its full this night.

"Yah! It would!" growled Noah. He scanned the somber heights of Pico Algo, flanking the channel entrance; the crescent harbor, the rimming sea-wall of Horta Port. "And not a cloud in the sky. What chance to slip ashore? Not a blasted one."

He bent to his task again, while Tompkins turned the stone. Tompkins, who was gunner of the Long Tom, had no sympathy with the aspirations of Mr. Grannis to desert, but the two men were friends. In a way, they had much in common. Both were seamen, shellbacks.

Shadows were creeping in from the western arm of the bay; the upper spars of the *General Armstrong,* privateer, were touched with golden sunlight still. At her main gaff drooped the American flag.

Two weeks out of New York, she lay at anchor in this neutral port to refill her depleted water-butts. Schooner built but now square-rigged as a barkentine, with ninety officers and men, a Long Tom 42-pounder on a pivot amidships and three long nines to a broadside, she had teeth to use. So far, on this 26th day of September in the year 1814, she had not used them—hence the growls of Noah Grannis, old Navy man, who was now out for prize money.

Tompkins could discount his messmate's growls. He grinned as he turned the cook's grindstone, while Grannis sent the sparks flying from a sheath-knife. He watched Grannis spit on a tar-blackened thumb, test the edge, and nod.

Knives stowed away, the two men lurched aft on bare feet. Grannis shoved into the knot of men who were idling there gamming and chewing tobacco as they sprawled around the Long Tom. Space was made for him. He plumped down, back against the pivot carriage,

and extended his half bared shanks in their short cotton trousers. He rolled his cud of hard twist and broke out with his perpetual grumble. Tompkins, looking on, listened.

"If all the cutlasses aboard were as sharp as this here knife, which they ain't, what's the bloody use? Clear from New York, and never a sight o' prize money. Pork and pease yesterday, lobscouse today, pickled horse tomorrow; and Tom, here, ain't had a hot meal all the way. The craft's Jonahed!"

"We slipped through the blockade off New York like that knife of your'n through green cheese," said someone. "Didn't even have a chance to leave a Britisher skys'ls down. That ain't bad luck!"

"No prizes, no prize money," said Noah dourly. "Damn such pickin's! I said from the start there was no luck in her."

Noah Grannis was held in respect by the men forward. Not for his surly ways nor his raw-boned, blue spotted features; but because those powder spots had come from service in the regular Navy. None the less, argument was argument, to Yankee seamen.

"But mind you, Noah," growled a voice. "This very craft took the *Queen* out o' Liverpool, with a half million dollar cargo. Pickin's there, and well 'arned they was."

"Yes," jeered Grannis. "And she was wrecked with her prize crew off Nantucket, and Davy Jones got the half million. D'ye think I've slung my hammock aboard for that kind o' luck?"

"Teeth and heels and freedom of the sea, Noah. Did you ship for just prize money? That ain't patriotism." A hum of assent followed the words. Grannis snarled at the lot of them. The shore had beckoned lustily to him, but the fat moon and the clear skies would spoil any desertion this night, and he was resentful of fate.

"Patriotism, hell! That pays in roundshot and grape. Why, damn your eyes, for what are we out privateering? You rate one share and down. Free seas and to hell with the British, says I, and never dodge a broadside. But when I see match touched to Long Tom, here, it means shore leave and money for grog and a lass."

"Was it so in the Navy, Mr. Noah?" Peter Whippen, the gunner's boy, stared with round eyes at the powder-smoked veteran.

"I was foretopman on the *Constitution*, two years ago, and what have I got in my locker to show for it? You know, lads, in the bloody Navy they throw the prize money at the ladder. What goes betwixt the ratlines falls to the officers, and what sticks is left for the crew."

"Did you ever see that done, Mr. Noah?" queried Peter Whippen.

"Many's the time. And mark ye, all the money that stuck to the ladder I could put in my ear. And I've seen other sights, too. Did I ever tell you of the flyin' fish in this very bay, that perched on a yard right atop my head and sung a ditty?"

"No!" gasped the boy.

"Fact. Or the baby in the Fiji Islands that was borned wearing a bead necklace?"

"How was that, Mr. Noah?"

Grannis scratched his hairy chest, shifted the bulge in his weathered cheek, and drooped a blue eye at the listening but silent Tompkins.

" 'Cause its mother swallered too many cherry pips. Or that—" Suddenly Grannis lifted his head with a jerk that shook his stubby pigtail. A rasping snarl came from him. "That's a heartening sound—and us fast to the bottom with every rag clewed down!"

"Sa-ail ho! Sa-ail ho!" The hail of the lookout aloft drifted with the fluttering excitement of a bosun's pipe.

"Where away?" sang out Lieutenant Worth from the quarterdeck.

"Standing right in, sir."

The group around the Long Tom were

on their feet now. A messenger scampered for the cabin; but Captain Reid, still in shore rig, chapeau and brass-buttoned blue cut-away, was already bolting on deck. William Tompkins was staring over the rail.

THE top canvas of a brig glimmered against the afterglow as she slowly swung in around the headland. Pennants flaunted challenge; the spars cleared the cape and the ensign at her gaff was plastered red and white against the sky.

"A brig of war and a scrouger!" muttered William Tompkins, who had done his time in the British navy. Noah Grannis emitted a low oath.

"No prize money there. A different kind o' metal, aye! Blast it, and now the moon's near up, and never a cloud—"

"Will we have a fight?" demanded Peter Whippen, breathless. A general laugh went up at the question.

"Not in a neutral port, boy," declared old Lem Chesley. "And 'tain't her like we be looking for on the high seas, neither."

"Yah!" snarled Granniss darkly. "Don't be so hearty about a neutral port. Damme if she ain't bearing in like a shark on a bait scent! It'd be just the luck of this blasted hooker of our'n, if John Bull would try to cut us out. The spiggoty castle over yonder hasn't a cannon ca'tridge to spend, and no guts for a showdown neither."

"Save your growls, Noah," spat out old Chesley. "It'd be ag'in all sea law."

"And you're a sea lawyer, huh? You rate only three-quarters of a share anyhow. Wait till you're piped aloft with a musket! I didn't sign on to be picked off like a squirrel, you bet. Sooner than that—" and Grannis shot a perturbed scowl toward the shoreline.

"There go the lubbers," said somebody. Consul Dabney and the other guests were piling into the gig. Grannis emitted a low curse; if only he had an oar in that gig! The consul's voice lifted as the oars dipped and the boat started shoreward.

"No fear, Reid! This is Portugal, you know; they wouldn't dare molest you."

The brig bore in, tall and stately. After a time her canvas came fluttering in. The rasp of her cable in the hawse hole drifted across the water. The rail of the Armstrong was crowded.

"Hey, Tompkins! You've s'arved in the British navy," said old Chesley. "What do you make her to be? Ever see her afore?"

"Aye," rejoined Tompkins grimly enough. "Damn her, I was impressed aboard her! She's the *Carnation*, eighteen; no doubt of it. I'd like to be laid 'longside of her once, with a pike in my hands and the bosun piping us away!"

No pleasure in his voice. If he ever stood helpless on that white deck yonder, it meant the cat and the long swing at the yardarm. American or not, he would be a deserter. He, of all the men here, had most at stake, and knew it well.

The rail of the privateer was crowded. The cook was standing on the roof of the galley. Captain Reid and his officers were clustered on the quarterdeck; no night glasses were necessary, for as the moon rose in the clear sky, every detail of the glinting harbor was plainly visible.

"She's dropping a boat, Mr. Noah!" squealed Peter Whippen, hanging on to the arm of Grannis. The boy had taken a gawkily hero-worshiping fancy to him, and the dour seaman liked it. Skip ashore, eh? Fast enough if the chance offered! Later in the night, perhaps; toward dawn would be the time. Suddenly a startled word broke on his lips.

"A boat? There's another dropping, and another—look at 'em, you shrimp? No cap'n's gig going ashore there. You're going to keep the powder bags moving for Long Tom, or I miss my guess!"

An excited mutter lifted. From the quarterdeck came sharper voices. Some-

thing about the British brig remaining across the harbor, afraid of the shoals.

"By heck, she means to cut us out!" old Chesley exclaimed shrilly. "In a neutral port! That's foul work, mates."

Grannis rasped out his harsh, biting laugh.

"We've a deck under us, and a cap'n who rates eleven shares o' prize money. Mebbe we'll take the king's brig, yonder, to pay for our gals ashore."

Four boats were down from the brig, now. Lanterns were glimmering, men and boat carronades descending. Reid's orders came with a sharp burst from the quarterdeck, with a bawl of voice and dancing shrill of bosun's pipe. It was trip anchor, carry out the cables, man the capstan bars and warp her into a berth close under the guns of the castle. A lot of good Portugee guns would do, Grannis reflected.

The schooner moved by slow inches, while a chantey broke out:

"It's farewell and adieu, to ye, Spanish ladies,
It's farewell and adieu to ye, ladies o' Spain,
For we've received orders to set sail from Cadiz—"

"Yah!" snarled Noah Granniss, standing at the 'midships rail and savagely eyeing the four boats. "Something more'n jaw tackle needed here!"

They were coming on abreast and converging upon the schooner. The oarlocks clanked steadily in the long man o' war stroke. The blades stirred white phosphorescent flashes like liquid moonlight. Darkly serried figures stood braced shoulder to shoulder, with a glint of steel.

"They won't board us, Mr. Noah?" quavered the boy anxiously.

"They will, Mr. Whippen; about a hundred and twenty of 'em," rejoined Grannis in mockery. "If you want to see 'em go starn all with a bellyache, mind you keep the powder coming up! And don't forget you rate half a share of the money, when we take the brig."

His sardonic words held acid. He glanced again at the shore. Here was a lost cause, a doomed and luckless ship. The best way out might be a quick dive and a sharp swim. Tompkins came up beside him and spoke under his breath.

"Belay your jaw tackle, you swab! I know you don't mean it, but—"

"Don't mean it?" Grannis cursed softly. "This is going to be a mess. I got no hankering for glory."

"Nor me for a yardarm. What you should ha' had aboard the *Constitution* was more rope ends and less powder. Watch your talk, blast you! This is a fight, and there's enough men here ready to cut and run without you slinging your loose talk."

"By God, you mean it!" Grannis peered at him. "Talk to me like that, will you?"

"And make you like it." Suddenly the voice of Tompkins was like cold steel. His face, as he peered into that of Grannis, was drawn and contorted. "My neck's at stake. Yours ain't. I aim to fight like hell for my neck, and you're helping me. So shut up. Too many men here think you're top dog because you're Navy. You cut and run, and I'll put a bullet into you, friend or not! Chaw on that, you—"

The word was a savage one. The eyes the face, the voice, were savage, shocking Grannis into silence. He had not dreamed that William Tompkins could erupt like this.

RUN? No chance. The moon was coming up bright and big. There were sharks in the bay, and men enough to loose muskets at a deserter; plenty of men wanted to cut and run. But Grannis, weighing his chances, decided not to be the first. Later, when the schooner got under the castle, he could make it more easily—

"Sa-ail ho!"

The lookout was hailing again with sudden excitement. Captain Reid leaped for the shrouds; a glimmer of canvas showed off the point of the cape.

"Masthead! What do you make her?"

"Two, sir. Looks like a frigate and a big ship of the line, standin' in for the channel."

Down came Reid with a thump. "Avast heaving—let go! Clear away the long gun and the sta-board—beat to quarters! We have to take care of those boats, lads."

Riding the tide, the schooner pulled at her hawsers. William Tompkins flung a sardonic look over the rail. Take care of those boats! He knew better than anyone else what British Navy boats meant. They went where the ships could not go. They did the impossible, the incredible. Cutting out ships at anchor was their specialty. Guns in their bows, dogged supermen at their oars—every British officer wanted nothing so much as a chance with the boats. It meant glory, advancement, everything!

The bosun piped, the drummer rolled his sticks, the fifer shrilled. A slapping thud of bare feet thrilled the deck as men ran to bulwarks, to gun stations, to get aloft. Gun tackles were cast off. Arms clattered and jingled as they were served out.

Little Peter Whippen ran to pass the powder cartridges up the main hatch for the Long Tom. Other powder passers—cabin boy, cabin steward, wardroom boy, bosun's boy—pattered to serve the broadside guns. With squawl and clatter the long nines were run out on their slides.

Tompkins eyed Noah Grannis grimly. No more talk of running. Tompkins was gun captain of the Long Tom, and his neck was at stake. But he knew Grannis. A lot of talk, a lot of growling, and when it came to the pinch, a good stiff fight.

The boats from the brig were nearing, now. Reid hailed through his trumpet. His voice bayed across the moonlight night.

"What boats? Ahoy! Sheer off, or I'll fire into you!"

The lips of Tompkins twitched sardonically at this; it was all sardonic, this scene. Fire into them? A lot they cared, those British! Well, for once they'd get fired into by a man whose neck was at stake!

No response; the boats oared steadily, doggedly onward. Tompkins hitched up his cotton trousers, spat out his orders, and swept his crew with calculating eye. John Rich, the Newburyport whaleman, was sponger; Greenleaf, the Gloucester fisherman, loader. Grannis, old *Constitution* seaman, held the match. Dan Taylor, of the Maine lobster potters, was on pump duty. Peter Whippen's tow head punctuated the open hatch, a paper powder-cartridges clutched to his chest. Here, too, was Lieutenant Worth, while the second lieutenant was forward, and Captain Reid on the quarterdeck.

The sack of grape had been rammed home. Abe Mason, mate in the China trade and now quarter gunner, wrestled at the screw while Tompkins patted the butt of the Long Tom and stooped for a squint down the iron. He caught a growl from Noah Grannis.

"A steady deck and no prize money, lads. Ain't that a bloody shame, now?"

"Noah! Stand by!" warned Tompkins, watching the boats swim under his sights.

Reid barked an order. Worth turned. "Throw it into 'em."

Tompkins stepped aside with a nod. Grannis extended his match staff to the primed vent, which spumed with a hiss of sparks. The long gun spouted thunder, the deck shook and trembled. Like a load of gooseshot the grape sprayed the water, clattered on the boats, sent oars flying like feathers. A yell went up.

"Sour grapes for John Bull!"

An excited squeal came from Peter Whippen, as he ran with the fresh cartridge and ducked back again.

Rich sponged, Grannis thumbed the vent. Pardon Greenfield, loader, inserted the cartridge; Rich reversed the sponge and with the rammer end hammered the

powder home, and the wad. Noah Grannis pricked the vent and seated a new priming tube down the hole. Again Tompkins was squinting along the iron, while Abe Mason worked the elevating screw.

The long nines of the starboard battery had opened, smoke was gushing up over the bulwarks, the ship was shivering and reeling. The boat carronades were ringing, muskets were flashing, iron and lead were pelting bulwarks and masts and whining all around. Tompkins straightened up. Noah Grannis laid the match—*boom!*

"Did you hit?" shrilled Peter Whippen, darting up with a fresh cartridge. "Did you hit, Mr. Noah?"

"If he didn't, someone else did," and Worth came staggering back from the rail. Grim jest still on his lips, the lieutenant collapsed against the hatchway combing.

The broadside guns were banging away. The boats were now inside the reach of the Long Tom—three of them out there. The men lining the schooner's rail were firing almost straight down with muskets. The fourth boat was in under the counter, grappling. And suddenly lusty yells pealed up.

"Quarter! Quarter!"

"Cease firing," came the order, and the smoke drifted up and away. A savage hail lifted from the boats.

"We're on reconnoissance from His Majesty's brig *Carnation*. What the devil do you mean by firing into us?"

Reid had his trumpet up. "You had warning to keep away. You meant to board us."

"What ship is that?"

"You know damned well, sir. The American armed schooner *General Armstrong*, of New York, in a neutral port."

"You fired into us. You'll find you can't skulk here. I'll report this to the *Carnation*. The commodore on the *Plantagenet* will hear of it, sir!"

OARS were working; the three boats were retiring. The boat alongside was feebly creeping out.

"Hurray!" crowed Peter Whippen. "We licked 'em! They won't come back. Mr. Noah?"

William Tompkins, his neck at stake, bent a grim look on his mates.

"The *Plantagenet* is a seventy-four; ain't none bigger'n she."

"Ha!" rasped the scathing laughter of Noah Granniss. "Plenty specie aboard her and slathers o' rum, eh? Sea room and the weather gage, tack like a dancing gal, rake her, board with pistol and cutlass—what's a seventy-four to us? Swaller her at one gulp. There's prize money for us, lads!"

"Hey, Noah! You gone crazy?"

"That's why I shipped." Grannis laughed again. "Cloud over the moon and a neutral port be damned! No prize money in sinking a few boats."

He was in a mad, furious mood of scorn and disgust. Bulwarks scored, spars furrowed, Burton Loyd dead under a sail, Lieutenant Worth like to dead in the cockpit. The frigate and seventy-four had anchored inside the channel. A blue rocket sailed up from the larger craft and signal lanterns were hoisted. Something was brewing, off there.

"All hands!" sang out Captain Reid. "Call away to warp, and lively!"

The cables, the clink of the capstans, the tramp, tramp of bare feet—Grannis stood at the rail. Tompkins came up to him, clapped him on the shoulder.

"You'd really like to run for it?"

"Aye, matey," said Grannis sourly. "I don't like this game."

"It's not begun to get hot yet," said Tompkins, in a low voice. "I know better'n you, Noah; when they lay us aboard, hell will bust loose. British Navy men—"

"Damn you, I know all that," snarled Grannis.

The frigate and the big ship were dropping boats, which filled with men

and drew up to the *Carnation*. Lanterns bobbed, arms flashed in the moonlight. Peter Whippen crowded up to the rail, and gasped.

"They're coming again, Mr. Noah! A thundering lot!"

Grannis chuckled. His voice swept out, no snarl in it now; Tompkins eyed him with a slow smile. He was beginning to understand the man.

"They rate a hundred fifty guns, twelve hundred men. I rate one share and you rate half as much, shrimp. Which ain't nothing, so far's prize money goes. Stir your pipestems and keep that powder coming, or we'll sling you over the rail!"

Four—seven—twelve boats in all, Tompkins counted them. They were heading across the outer harbor in tow of the *Carnation*, whose yards were braced to the light breeze. In the background, the frigate and ship of the line waited, battle lanterns winking from the lower shrouds and along the decks—

"Avast heaving! Moor bow and stern. Springs on the cables!"

The *Armstrong* was in shoal water. William Tompkins looked out at the crawling boats and brigs and the battle lanterns beyond; for an instant his heart stopped with a splurge of fright, purely an involuntary reflex from the days he had served as an impressed seaman. The cat, the bloody stripes, the swinging thing at the yardarm—and those grimly obstinate men yonder, defying all law, determined to clap a stopper on this American vessel and all in her. Why, this flag was no protection to him—

A hand gripped his arm. It was Grannis.

"You're right, Willum, you're right. It's hell a-bilin' and us for it, and I'm your man for the hot work. You and me, I guess we understand each other, matey."

William Tompkins grunted, and wondered if his face had betrayed him in the silver light. He grinned, the other grinned, and they looked out across the water again, and then to larboard.

THE *Armstrong* had come within pistol-shot of the sea-wall at the base of the silent, useless castle, whence no help would come, although it commanded the harbor from the inner curve of the crescent shore. Her larboard broadside was facing that sea-wall, a waste of good cannon.

Peter Whippen tugged at Grannis, pointing ashore to the black-massed figures along the wall.

"Look at the crowd, Mr. Noah! Did you ever see such a sight?"

"I've seen a-plenty," barked Grannis. "Out o' the way! Think you're at a peep-show? Look alive!"

Orders, orders, orders—voices roaring along the decks, bosun's pipe shrilling, men panting and swearing. Reid was awake now and no mistake. Over with two of the long nines, from larboard battery to starboard. Axes! Hack openings for ports in the bulwarks! Trice up the nettings, and sharp about it! The boarding nettings, of stout tarred rope in mesh, were stretched taut and high above the rail from stem to stern.

"There they go!" was the cry. Tompkins peered and saw the boats cast off by the brig. In three divisions, they were making behind a low reef, just beyond gunshot. So suddenly that it made him jump, he heard the voice of Reid from the rail above.

"Call away, bose! Drummer, beat to stations. Serve out all the arms and boarding caps. Get up more grape, there!"

The arms chests clattered out their contents. Lockers and racks below decks were cleaned of musket and pike and cutlass. Whippen and the other boys panted under the weight of leather fire buckets brimmed with pistols. Sacks of grape were passed up and piled high.

Along the bulwarks and about the masts were ranged the spare muskets,

pikes, tomahawk axes. Racked roundshot lined the rails, studded the hatch coamings and the quarterdeck. Another order, and a cheer went raggedly into the moonlight, as balled pennants went up at main and fore—the Stars and Stripes in line, and the square red flag of No Quarter.

"Very good; pipe down," came Reid's voice. "All hands will rest at stations till called to action. No cheering until we've beat them off."

"No stir in the castle, sir," reported the second lieutenant. "Nothing to be looked for from the Portuguese, evidently."

"The consul said he would make protest, but advised me we could expect nothing—"

The voices moved away and were gone. Grannis turned as Peter Whippen tugged at his sleeve.

"Do we stay here, Mr. Noah?"

"Till we're grounded on our beefbones—aye, we stay." Over the boy's head, Grannis looked significantly at Tompkins. "Best close your winkers, shrimp—"

"Gunner!" That was second lieutenant Alex Williams, suddenly appearing. "Is your piece loaded with grape?"

"Aye, aye, sir, loaded from t'other setto," Tompkins said smartly, jerking a leather boarding cap to his skull. "But I'm minded to draw the charge and tuck in a pill for the first round, with the compliments of the ship, sir."

"Have your way," and Williams nodded.

Tompkins bent over the top roundshot of a boxed pyramid. With a bit of red chalk fished from a pocket, he scrawled on the cold iron a rude skull and crossbones.

"There's a picture to make 'em pipe their eyes when it lands in their laps! Out wi' that grape, lads. In with this and seat it snug. It's a sure bellyache or Long Tom's no doctor!"

Laughing, Williams passed on.

"Did you ever do this before, Mr. Noah?" piped up young Whippen, beside Grannis.

"With no prize money ahead? Not me. Except when nothing stuck to the ladder, young 'un! I'd like to see it bound for the guts o' that seventy-four yonder! First we got to beat off them boats."

Tompkins spoke up with concentrated venom in sudden explosive words.

"What I want to see is the first head coming up the side. I've had the bosun's lady too often oboard that hellship."

He stretched out. Young Whippen nestled against the hatch coaming at the top of the ladder; despite excitement, his head drooped. There was a lull now. The watch was on duty, the men reposed. Grannis nodded beside the powdermonkey.

Tompkins, round glazed boarding-cap settled on his head to his pigtail, sat against the pivot carriage of his gun. The officers aft were watching the reef and boats, the ships, the crowded sea wall and the equally crowded rigging of the merchant ships at moorings in harbor. All eyes there, ashore and afloat, were upon the schooner and the boats clustering behind the reef.

The scoured deck of the *Armstrong* gleamed whitely in the moonlight. The tide bore her on the springs of her cables; the black tracery of shrouds and stays and spars glided back and forth, swinging like a compass needle. The five polished long nines shimmered in the moonbeams. The arrayed weapons glinted with flashes of life. Fore and aft along the guns, and here about the Long Tom, under the breechings and in the shadows, the men sprawled and slept and snored.

Whaleman, fisherman, oyster dredger, Navy men, deserters—they were laid out like a party back from shore leave. Grannis gave Tompkins a grin and a sour word.

"I've seen sights, but this beats all," he muttered. "No prize money, and no shore, neither—not wi' them sharks about. Stay wi' the bad luck, blast it!"

Tompkins stirred. Four bells; ten

o'clock. Rising, he squinted at the reef. Blue-light signals between boats and ships. John Bull was taking his time making ready. Easing himself down again into the scuppers, William Tompkins put his shoulders against the rail, and settled lower. He sighed, drew a long breath, and fell asleep.

"Look alive! They're coming out!"

TOMPKINS jerked awake and came to his feet with a spring. Eight bells, midnight. The bell-chimes from ship to ship in the harbor were dying out. The moon was high and bright. Men were being wakened all along the deck. Peter Whippen, from the hatchway, was goggling and pointing in excitement, clawing at Grannis, piping at him. Tompkins joined them, hitched up his trousers, gnawed off a fresh hunk of hard-twist, and levelled an eye at the low black reef. The reef was a-bristle—it was moving! No; boats were clearing its end, that was all. Out they came—five, nine, twelve launches in line ahead, a column of beetle shapes working phosphorescent legs as they cut the silvery surface of the water.

"How many men, Mr. Noah?" demanded the boy.

"Nigh to five hundred, eh, Tompkins?"

"Just about," said the gun captain with cool appraisal.

"Silence aboard!" came the curt command.

A staggering figure came from below—Lieutenant Worth, bandages sopping blood, making painful way to the quarterdeck. The sound of his dragging heels ceased; a tense silence settled down. No hail from the boats, none from Reid. A massed murmur of voices drifted from the crowd ashore. The boats drew on. The measured swish and thump of the determined oars made a tick-tock like the speeding seconds of a clock upon the hour.

Second Lieutenant Williams was here in the waist, third lieutenant Johnson was up forward. Peter Whippen bobbed up with cartridges hugged against his breast, waiting with bated breath. The other powder passers were at stations. Firefly matches glowed all along the deck, marines hooked into the shrouds, topsmen aloft, the cook squatting with a musket atop his galley. The spurt of spray from the prow of the leading launch, sunk to the gunnels with massed men, made a white mark.

Tompkins squinted down the long cylinder, over the flaring rim.

"First one is dead abeam with her jaws open, sir!" he said in a savage voice. Lieutenant Williams, watching the quarterdeck, caught the slight signal.

"If she wants the pill, gunner, toss it to her!"

Grannis darted down his match. The vent fumed. The long forty-two belched and roared. The water just before the leading launch erupted liquid silver; the whole prow of the launch flew high in air, scattering men and oars around—

"There goes flukes! She sounds!" yelled John Rich, the whaleman.

The launch, indeed, was settling like a whale sounding from the harpoon, bows up and bottom ripped out. She was gone in an eddy of threshing men.

"First dose o' camphire, sulphire and hellfire," declared Tompkins, while Long Tom was reloaded at speed. "Grape, this time—grape!"

The second boat in line had ploughed right through the flotsam without pause. Hands clutched at the oars and gunnels of the following boats; men were dragged aboard and the volleying British cheer came over the water. Tompkins cursed the sound of it.

The broadside burst forth with flame and iron. Long Tom spewed out with roaring voice. The boats were heading in for bows, for the 'midships rail, for the quarter. Their bow carronades whanged out viciously; muskets again drummed a tattoo of lead along the schooner's side,

sent balls whistling viciously through the rigging.

A storm of oaths burst from Tompkins. Solid shot from those bow carronades had sent Long Tom aslew on his battered carriage. The boats were under the muzzles of the broadside guns, coming in with a rush; the breeches had been chocked up to the last notch. The boats were safe from them now.

"All hands repel boarders!"

Marines were blazing down with guns and pistols. The gun crews caught up pike and cutlass, hurled roundshot from the rail and shrouds. Noah Grannis whirled an axe to his shoulder and waited. Tompkins was aware of him there, but said nothing.

Boat hooks were stabbing, grapnels were being thrown; men were falling asprawl on the thwarts or into the water, but the boarders were coming up, with a yell and a flash of steel. The first figures were rising. Up came an officer in navy blue and epaulets, slashing with a sword at the tarred netting.

"Get off this ship!" squawked Peter Whippen hysterically, and slashed out with his little dirk. Above him towered the grimly silent William Tompkins, driving out with his boarding pike. He sank it half length between the throat lapels of the brave coat.

Clamor and fury all along the rail, clash of steel, thud of pike, staccato bang of musket or pistol, yells, throaty curse, screams. The boarding netting was shaking from stem to stern. The net was slashed and ripped. Tompkins fought in a wild, shaking grip of fury.

Now men were at grips through the holes. Coupled like terriers in a death grip, they came to the deck. Bodies were tossed back again over the rail. The British were in, were over—and were tumbled back again, twice, three times, the boats set adrift. One launch remained, stubborn grapnel holding fast.

"Clean her out!" yelled Tompkins, in a frenzy. Over the rail he went. Over went Noah Grannis, over went a dozen more, leaping from the rail and its sagging net. The launch below was cleared, axe and cutlass hacked. With a wide grin, Tompkins came swarming back, the others after him, exultant.

This amidship. On the starboard quarter was a different story. The enemy were up and over. Lieutenant Williams was down. Worth was on one knee, still fighting; Peter Whippen was in and out like a stinging hornet with his dirk. Captain Reid had crossed swords with a British lieutenant. He was wounded.

All this Tompkins saw in one glance, as he came with the frenzied rush. The enemy were swept from the quarterdeck, over the rail; axe and pike hacked and stabbed. All was cleared in a trice. The boats under the counter shoved off, or went drifting away, while hot lead and cold roundshot plunked down at them.

High time, too! Across the forward deck brushed a swirl of figures, with frantic yells for help; the other boat crews were making good their footing. The cook was wildly flailing about with a handspike in the thick. Lieutenant Johnson was down. Tommy Shortridge, the bosun's boy, was at grips with a midshipman of his own half-pint size.

Reid, his head dripping scarlet, led the rush forward. Pike and clubbed musket, cutlass and knife—one eddying swirl, and the boarders were broken and scattered. They tumbled back, yes; but here underneath, a huge launch was making fast, crammed with men. All the netting here was swept away in tatters. The launch was vomiting men; muskets blazed upward, figures were mounting in the chains.

William Tompkins had lost his weapon. With a grunting heave, he set himself to the weight of the galley grindstone and yanked it from his bed. With the stone in his crimsoned arms, he heaved up the burden, sent it hurtling down. He caught one blood-mad-

dening vision of the moiling figures below, of arms clutching and reaching, of muskets belching toward him—then the stone landed true, crashing through the bottom of good Dantzic oak, and the launch went swirling and sinking.

Tompkins went stark blazing mad. He stood shaking his fists, yelling at the top of his lungs—and was suddenly seized and jerked around. A huge-knuckled fist was under his nose, the cook was roaring at him, a red hand uplifting a reddened handspike.

"You blasted swab, you've lost me the grindstun! Damn your eyes—"

Noah Grannis shoved the furious cook aside.

"None o' that! Get a new one out o' your prize money, you lubber's mate!"

Tompkins leaped to the rail. The attack was beaten off. Two boats sunk; two abandoned, floating alongside with their dead and dying; two more drifting helpless to shore. Six were toiling across the silver moonpath toward the ship; one had only a mere pair of oars going.

"We licked 'em!" Peter Whippen flailed the broad back of Grannis with puny fists. "We licked 'em! Ever see a sight like that, Noah?"

"Never did see none to equal it, so cross my heart!" affirmed Grannis, with a broad grin, and lifted the boy to swing him lustily in air.

William Tompkins found the boarding-pike he had lost, and stood feeling a dent in his boarding-cap; he touched the sore skull beneath and cursed heartily. Where or how he had got the blow, he had no idea. He turned as Reid came among the men, sword waving.

"One cheer, men, then clear ship. Make it hearty—hurray!"

The cheer lifted it. After it, Tompkins caught a wink and a laugh and a hearty word from Grannis—the same old growl, but with the sting gone.

"And never a shot in my locker for it! I might's well have stayed aboard the *Constitution* and collected my share from the ladder. Hurray!"

LIEUTENANT WILLIAMS was dead. Long Tom half dismounted, netting in shreds, three of the nine-pounders dismounted. Limp and bloody bodies to be dragged aside, hurt men to be aided, weapons everywhere, starboard rail darkly stained and reeking. Cheers were volleying from the watching crowds along the sea-wall, but no cheers came from the far British decks.

The ships' bells were striking twice. One o'clock. Tompkins and Grannis were inspecting the Long Tom when Peter Whippen panted up to his hero.

"Mr. Noah! Be they coming again?"

"Aye," said Grannis solemnly. "All three, and now we'll take the big 'un, me and Willum here. The seventy-four, mind. She'll have money aboard her, too!"

They fell to the job, and presently had Long Tom righted and chocked on an even keel once more. The broadside guns were got into shape and reloaded. Roundshot was again pyramided, small arms were racked, the deck was flushed and swabbed, and a new netting was rigged. Grog was served all around. Now there was respite, rest, an exultant tattle of tongues.

A boat was put out. The dead and wounded were sent ashore, with Captain Reid at the tiller. Presently it came pulling back to the ship, and Reid came to the deck.

"Men," he said calmly, "the consul warns me we're not to be let alone. Next time it'll be big guns. Any of you who want to go ashore, are at liberty to go. The rest will sleep at quarters."

There was a laugh and a hum of comment. Grannis nudged his gun captain.

"Changed my mind about goin' ashore. You cal'late to stay, huh?"

"For a while," said Tompkins. "If I could only get one shot fair and square at the damned old *Carnation*, I'd swing and glad of it! Just one!"

Some slept along the decks, some did not. Tompkins and Grannis sat against

the repaired carriage of Long Tom and talked. Noah Grannis had lost most of his surly humor, for the good Medford rum was warm in his belly and the fresh hunk of twist comforted like a lollypop.

When Tompkins came awake, the bright moon had become a low-hanging yellow ball; in the east was growing the first flush of dawn. The schooner gently rocked on the swells. The seventy-four was signaling, bosuns' pipes were shrilling, drums and fifes were beating to quarters. The *Carnation* brig was sheeting home her topsails.

The sleeping decks squirmed and came to life. Matches glowed in the dawn as men waved them in little arcs to quicken the spark. Peter Whippen, looking wan and pinched and sleepy, appeared in the hatchway with another cartridge hugged to his chest, waiting, alert.

Tompkins, sweeping an eye about his crew, patted the breech of Long Tom, and spat defiantly. All heat was gone now, and the dawn was cold; he wished to hell he could get one shot slap home there! The brig slanted in with ports triced up, her broadside of black muzzles ready, her battle ensign flapping. In the ratlines, men were taking soundings as she felt her way along.

A low word passed. Tompkins squinted again over Long Tom. A flick of his finger; Mason and the pump man braced to their handspikes and shouldered Long Tom on his pivot, inch by inch. The muzzle swung, and bore fair.

"Watch out," said Tompkins ominously. "Cover up, boy—"

The brig luffed slightly. Smoke gushed from her ports, her masts careening to the recoil. The schooner reeled and shivered as the iron smashed home. Tompkins nodded. Grannis darted in his match, and Long Tom roared.

Tompkins was jumping to windward to clear the smoke. The huge black ball could just be seen in its flight; water gushed two fathoms short of the brig's quarter, and then it was into her with a smash distinctly heard. As the brig glided on, the water spouted again beyond her—the ball must have gone clear through her.

Cheers rolled up; the men were working like mad. The brig hauled around to serve her larboard guns. She was closer now. The smoke gushed. Along the schooner's deck the long nines barked out; Tompkins, oblivious to hammering iron and flying splinters, squinted and signaled, and Long Tom roared anew. Everything was smoke and hurtling death, until the orders were passed.

"She's hauling off again."

"Cease firing with those nine-pounders! You can't reach her now—"

True enough. The gun crews peered as the light breeze carried off the smoke. The brig, with lower canvas shot-holed, Irish pennants dangling, woodwork splintered, had tacked. She headed about and stood directly in. Smoke gushed from her—bow-chasers at work, long eighteen-pounders.

"I'll trim her!" rasped Tompkins. He leaned again, his cheek flinching from the hot breech. "I'll l'arn her the long game if I'm hung, drawn and quartered for it!" The blast of eighteen-pound shot thudded into the doomed schooner again. He waited grimly. "Hold on till I catch the roll—now, now!"

He ducked away as the vent spouted to the match of Grannis, and Long Tom's deep-throated voice bellowed. The brig's foretopmast lopped, hung, then pitched down in a clutter of tophamper.

Sailors swarmed aloft to clear her wreckage; she drifted, with her bow-chasers silenced. The schooner's nine-pounders, chocked to full elevation and began to open upon her anew. A yell from the crew, and Long Tom was ready. Another roar, scoring this time with a smash into the hull.

The guns paused, to cool. The brig had cut her wreckage adrift and was clear, but a flood of curses burst from William Tompkins.

"Look! Recall signals from the big 'un! She'll get away with good excuse—and I was counting on patching my bottom sheathing with her colors!"

THE brig stood away for her former anchorage. Tompkins looked down the decks. Damage enough, but apparently no one hurt. Outmanned, outgunned, the schooner had ridden like a buoyed target, and His Majesty's brig was whipped.

Yelling like mad, the men lined the rail. Only Captain Reid, glass in hand, was calm in the newborn daylight.

"Boat comin' off from shore!" came down the hail. "I think them two other craft are gettin' ready to weigh and stand in."

A ladder was put out. Reid met the Portuguese officer who clambered aboard, took the note that was handed him, and nodded. The Portuguese left. Reid crumpled and let fall the note and mounted into the shrouds with his glass.

Tompkins saw the bosun's mate pick up the note with his toes, hitch along into cover, and then examine it. The man came over with a grin.

"The Spiggoties sent word through the consul," he imparted briefly, "that they don't dare run athwart John Bull's hawse, or he'll blow their castle sky high!"

Boats were plying hard; the scarred *Carnation* was repairing damages. The frigate and ship were waking to life. The voices of men at the capstan bars drifted across the water.

"Here comes hell," said Tompkins grimly.

They all knew it. Uneasy eyes went to Captain Reid, who clapped his glass together and swung down to the deck. He looked aloft at the colors, then came forward.

"We've done enough for glory, men. We've whipped those fellows three times, but now they're bringing metal enough to sink us. They can stand off and hammer us. If we had sea-room, we might show 'em a trick or two."

"Gimme two Long Toms like this here," muttered Tompkins, "and damn the sea-room!"

Reid's eye dwelt on William Tompkins for an instant; perhaps those words had reached to him. Then he nodded.

"Throw the powder and extra small arms over. Spike the carronades. Put out the boats. Gunner! Swing in your long piece, point it down the hatch, and stand ready to blow the bottom out of her. All they'll get is a scuttled ship."

So it was done, while the two big ships stood in under a glory of gleaming canvas, and the three-decker made ready her heavy guns.

The men were in the boats, all of them. Tompkins stood by with his match, looking up at the quarterdeck where Captain Reid waited, the colors in one arm, portfolio of papers under the other. Reid gave him the signal; the match came down.

Long Tom thundered for the last time, went toppling from the carriage as the schooner reeled and rocked. Tompkins scrambled down into a boat, and Reid came after, deliberately.

The schooner was settling; the water was creeping up, her counter overhang was narrowing, her carronade ports were low. Reid stood up in his boat.

"Three cheers for the *Armstrong!* They can board her now, but they'll never board us—hurray!"

The cheers rang out. Noah Grannis put his arms about young Peter Whippen, who was blubbering unashamed. Grannis spat to leeward over the butt of the tiller.

"Well, there goes Long Tom to join your dummed grindstun, cook! And all for what? A lee shore and no prize money to draw on. The devil's own luck," he rasped. "Damned fools, all of us—and no prize money. Huh!"

He met the grimly exultant eye of William Tompkins, and they grinned together.

They got the full shock of the charge.

THE FIGHT AT THE GATE

By JOHN KENT

A SPY came into the ramshackle post on the India northwest frontier one morning with the information that Professor Macklin had been murdered and two sahibs, the only survivors of the party, were trying to fight their way through with about half the Halali tribesmen on their heels. Professor Macklin had taken with him on an archeological study his daughter and son-in-law, Valerie and Ronnie Swain.

While the trumpets were sounding "Boots and Saddles," Major Mark Alison radioed the news to the nearest garrison at Fort Regale, four days' march away. Then he rode out at the head of two troops of his lancers, equipped for three days in the open. That was fifteen minutes after the messenger had arrived in the post. Rapid moves become automatic on the northwest frontier.

He left his subaltern in command at Sawar Kotal and led the two troops himself, for he suspected the Halalis were out for more than the extermination of a couple of sahibs.

They rode hard and without taking the usual precautions. By rights they should have thrown out a screen and covered the hills on their flanks, but they did not wait for this. Alison had heard there was a woman with the professor's party and he knew the Halalis. The result was that they caught about two hundred tribesmen in the open and were able to ride through them twice before they scattered. The Halalis had expected the usual fringe of British scouts would give them warning but instead they got the full shock of the charge.

Alison sent the risaldar major with one troop to follow up the pursuit, while

he rode over to the scattered boulders which had been the Halalis' objective when he had taken them in the flank.

He called out: "We heard your rifle and came straight for the sound of the shots. Where's the other fellow? Our spy said there were two of you." The khaki-clad figure which had risen to greet him seemed to droop. Then: "If you mean my husband," said Valerie Swain, "he . . . he went back to find a better position." She glanced over her shoulder at the hill behind her and Alison saw a man waving to them from about halfway up.

Valerie ejected a shell from the express rifle she had been using and seemed anxious to change the conversation.

"There, that's the last cartridge," she remarked. "You timed your arrival beautifully."

Alison was still watching the other man through narrowed eyes.

"Why didn't you get back to the high ground with your husband?" he asked bluntly.

Valerie flushed.

"I preferred to remain here," she said. She might have got away with the bluff if she hadn't swayed suddenly and crumpled up on the rocks. Then Alison noticed that the puttee on her left leg was soaked with blood from knee to ankle.

It was while he was cleaning up the wound that Ronnie Swain joined him. Alison didn't look up; he felt he couldn't. There were several things he wanted to say to Mr. Swain, but he doubted if he could get them off before Valerie came around.

Meanwhile Swain was being profuse in his thanks. Then he saw what Alison was doing and sat down suddenly. He said: "Sorry, Major, but the sight of blood always makes me feel faint."

"That's bad," said Alison, still intent on his task. "And you're gun-shy too. Any other ailments?"

Ronnie got up and walked away, but a full packet of express rifle ammunition fell out of his shirt pocket as he moved, and Alison called him back.

"Here's your wife's last round," he said, handing Ronnie a brass shell. "Better keep it—as a souvenir."

THE risaldar major and his troop rode up just then and stopped any further comments. The Halalis had got into the foothills and it had been impossible to follow them further. The Indian officer looked grave, for already the double "plop-plop" of long range fire came from the other side of the wide valley.

Valerie was beginning to show signs of returning consciousness, and Alison said to Ronnie: "If you and your wife will ride with the vanguard—"

But Ronnie interrupted swiftly. "But —but, wouldn't it be better—?"

"Don't disturb yourself. The vanguard is the safest place, Mr. Swain. And I will send the risaldar major with you. I shall take charge of the rear guard, as I'm afraid those sportsmen are going to follow us right up to the post. Oh, and by the way, will you please try to show as brave a face as possible, when the shooting starts in earnest? We have a certain reputation for courage in these parts and I should hate to feel you were letting it down before my men."

Alison was doing his best to sting Ronnie back to manhood, but Valerie hardly appreciated his efforts. The look she gave him made him flush darkly, for all that his remarks had been fully justified. Even Ronnie started to protest, but this was spoilt by the sudden cringe he gave when a Kabul-made bullet spat viciously past them.

Alison issued his orders and remained behind with a handful of dismounted troopers, while the others rode off. That he conducted one of the bitterest rear guard actions within the memory of the Halalis was due to the look Valerie had given him before they parted.

For all that, they were fighting almost hand to hand when at last the rear guard reached the post. Only the timely arrival of the risaldar major, who had thrust his charges into safety and then ridden back to reinforce Alison, enabled them to bring in all their casualties. And, again knowing the Halalis, Alison could never have returned without them.

There was plenty of news awaiting him when he got back. Fort Regale was despatching a column to his aid, which might reach him in four days if they were not too heavily engaged on the way up. More spies had come in, confirming the news that this was a general rising and that already the entire fighting force of the Halalis was working round the post. They had sworn to wipe out the garrison before the Fort Regale column could reach them. Alison felt they had every prospect of carrying out their threat, for his command had been heavily depleted by sickness even before he had sustained more casualties in rescuing the Swains. And anyhow the post had never been intended for a defensive position.

He discussed the situation with his subaltern and the risaldar major while he made his dispositions.

"We shall have to revise the standing orders," he said. "As things are we've hardly got enough men to hold the perimeter, let alone provide a reserve. We'll divide the defense into three. Bill, you'll take the water bastion and keep 'em back from the water supply; that'll be your job. Risaldar Major Sahib, you will take the main gate guard—."

The bearded Indian officer smiled. He had a suspicion that the Halalis would launch their real attack at the main gate, and there was a perfect field of fire for them to cross in front of it.

"This is going to be a riot," said the subaltern cheerfully. "I was afraid we might have to abandon the post and withdraw on Fort Regale."

"That's what we ought to do," Alison agreed, "but although this is only supposed to be an advanced cavalry post in the general scheme, we'll just have to hold it. They've got around us too quickly and it's too late to try to cut our way through now, especially—"

He was thinking of Valerie Swain. Risky as the defense was, it was safer than trying to get her through the ring of Halalis whose drums and cries could already be heard in the growing darkness.

"What about this bloke Swain?" the subaltern asked. He had only seen their visitor when he rode into camp and any man was equal to man's work in the youth's estimation.

"We'll put him up at the main gate with the risaldar major," Alison said after a pause. He didn't want to tell his subaltern that Swain was worse than useless; somehow it didn't seem fair to Valerie. "You'd better go and warn him for duty, Bill," he added, hoping Swain would be able to pull himself together in front of a stranger.

Swain came to see Alison after he'd got his orders. He said his nerves had been shaken by his recent ordeal, and might he help Valerie with the wounded in the Mess, where the temporary hospital had been established?

Alison said: "Look here, Swain, I've got a lot of young soldiers in this place. It's up to us all to set them an example. Besides, after this morning's exhib—fighting, you've got your big chance."

But Swain went on pleading. "As one white man to another," he began and Alison turned on him. He'd had a fairly trying day and he couldn't rid himself of the memory of Swain scrambling up that hillside with the ammunition, one round of which he should have reserved for his wife. He must have heard of the Halalis' reputation with women. So he said:

"Damn you, you coward, I don't care if you're white, black or yellow. If you're not on the main gate guard when I come round later, by the living God, Swain,

I'll rout you out and shoot you like a rat."

LATER, as he stood in an embrasure in the south bastion, watching the Halalis working nearer, he wondered if there was any excuse for Ronnie Swain. He knew the man's nerves had been shaken all right, for he had heard from Valerie that the Halalis had followed an old custom of theirs and had sent some of the professor's body to them before they had attacked. Stronger nerves than Swain's have protested against that practice before now. But even this was no excuse for leaving a wounded woman in the face of such an enemy. Indeed, it made the crime all the more hideous. . . .

A splutter of musketry heralded the Halali attack and Alison thrust Swain from his mind, although Valerie still contrived to occupy a small corner of it, even when the attack was at its height.

After the first rush had been driven back and while the enemy were reorganizing for their next assault, Alison visited the main gate guard. He was relieved to find Swain crouching behind the breastworks. He wondered if he would have put his threat into execution if Swain had stayed absent.

Swain called out to him: "You'll never be able to hold out for four days, Major." But Alison ignored him. He went to speak to the risaldar major, who was justly incensed that the recent fighting had been round the south bastion and had left the far more tempting main gate unscathed.

"But we shall have them, sahib," the Indian laughed. "Never fear but that they will be foolish enough to attack this point. And then. . . ."

Alison heard Swain shifting uneasily behind him, but he took no notice. He went on to the mess to see the wounded. At least, this was what he assured himself. Valerie Swain made him wonder why he had always been a bachelor.

Valerie had been very busy. She had bandaged up the nine men hit badly enough to be sent down from the south bastion and wanted to know if she might come up to the firing line and treat the slightly wounded who were there. She was able to hobble about with the aid of a stick, though her wound was obviously paining her. But just then the firing broke out again and Alison told her to wait. She'd have plenty more cases to deal with very shortly.

This time the risaldar was right and Alison had only to stand to arms in case the attack on the main gate was a feint. He hated waiting inactive while the Very lights shot up and the rifles chattered over the gate, but this was his duty.

Valerie Swain, however, was not bound by the code of military duty. Soon after Alison left her, she limped over to the main gate to see how things were going and, perhaps, to comfort her husband. Even when the attack developed she did not turn back.

Had she not gone on it is just possible that Ronnie might have come through his ordeal, if not with glory at least without shame. No man likes being shot at, but one has to assume a cheerful indifference for the sake of others and for one's own good name. It is in most cases only the fear of showing fear that creates courage. Unfortunately Ronnie's fear was greater than his honor. But the risaldar major was careful to stand between him and the men after the first few shots had been fired.

Valerie had no fear at all. This is where women score so heavily over men, pain and suffering being a part of their lives and holding no unknown terrors for them. So she struggled up the ladder which led to the gallery above the gate.

At first she didn't see Ronnie. It was only when the risaldar came to her at the head of the ladder and tried to get her to go back, that she noticed her husband crouched behind the parapet, taking no part in the fighting. She

asked: "Is the sahib wounded?" and the risaldar lied promptly that this was indeed so and that he would send him down to the mess a little later. But she brushed past him and crossed the bullet swept gallery to Ronnie's side.

"Are you hurt, dear?" she asked as she knelt beside him. And then she saw his face, convulsed with fear. And because one does not trouble over much about the nicer formalities, nor mince one's words when the bullets are putting up spurts of dust and whining in the air. she said: "My God, Ronnie, you're yellow," and started to limp blindly back to the ladder. He called after her, trying to tell her that the man beside him had been hit, that he had heard for the first time the sickening "crack" of a bullet striking home into living flesh, that his nerves were all to hell because of an attack of malaria. She took no heed. Ronnie was always over ready with excuses, but this time it was too late.

Ronnie, having seen her eyes, knew that he had lost her. Yet he still could not bring himself to face the enemy, even when the risalder major stooped over him and tried to encourage him "for the sake of the memsahib." For the Indian officer too had seen Valerie's eyes.

Almost as soon as she got back to the mess the firing at the gate died down and Valerie saw the risaldar major coming across the square. He was bearing Ronnie's body in his arms and cried out to her:

"Did I not tell thee the sahib was wounded? His head was turned from thee and thou didst not notice. But look. . . ." He placed Ronnie at her feet and showed the dull red mark on his left temple from which the blood still oozed. But she knew that no bullet could have made that mark and the risaldar major could not meet her eyes when she asked how it had happened. She bent to examine the wound. It was roughly V shaped and could only have been made with the narrowing steel guard of a cavalry sabre; such a sabre as swung at the risaldar major's left side. But when she would have questioned him further, the man had gone.

FOR twenty-two hours Ronnie lay in the hospital, although he was far less hurt than most of the men lining the defenses. At the end of that time Alison insisted he should walk round the post. This was not sheer brutality, for by now the major could almost feel a certain sympathy for this wreck of a man. He realized that the knowledge of his own cowardice and of the fact that Valerie was now irretrievably lost to him must be driving Swain almost mad. Cowardice, Alison thought, might have compensations, but nothing on God's earth could ever replace Valerie. But he had heard the men whispering among themselves about the strange sahib who would not fight, and this was bad. Therefore Alison ordered Swain to walk with him that rumor might be stilled.

When Ronnie saw the handful of wounded left to hold the defenses, and looked out into the growing twilight and saw the hordes of enemy massing in the rocks, he clutched at Alison's arm and muttered:

"You can't do it, Major. You can't hold out. What shall we do? Isn't it possible to make terms. . . .?"

"Surrender with the honors of war?" grinned Alison through the blood and filth that smeared his face. "Sorry, but the Halalis' ideas of the honors of war don't correspond with ours."

"When is the earliest the relieving column can reach us? Why in hell can't they send up troop-carrying planes?"

"Couldn't land here, Swain; too rocky."

"Are we to be left to our fate?" Ronnie was almost sobbing. Alison took pity on him and tried to comfort him.

"Cheer up," he said, "we've had a

message that an armored car company is trying to get through from Dag Sara. With any luck they'll make it and should arrive about dawn tomorrow."

"Dawn tomorrow? What good is that?" Ronnie waved towards the darkening hills. "Those devils will be in with their next attack. As to fighting them off for another twelve hours, it's impossible. We shall be massacred in the post; slaughtered like rats in a trap—"

The drums in the distance were beating up to a crescendo. The shouts of the tribesmen were clearly audible. Alison was more than half inclined to agree with Swain, but he said stiffly:

"A certain Scottish general once stated, 'We maun juist fecht'. That seems to be the only possible solution to our present tactical problem, Mr. Swain."

And with that he turned on his heel and went back to the south bastion, leaving Ronnie standing irresolute in front of the mess.

And as he stood there, the clamor without the walls swelled to a roar and the Halali attack was launched.

This time they attacked at all points. They too had heard of the armored cars hurrying up from Dag Sara and they knew their time was short. Their very precipitation was their undoing, for the swarming hosts made easy targets and the losses they suffered in that wild assault discouraged them from pressing home their other attacks during the night.

Just before the shells from the light guns of the armored cars started to burst over them, they made one more attempt to force the main gate, and when, later, Major Alison was able to go and inspect the position, he saw how near to success they had come.

Unnoticed, Valerie joined him as he stood with the risaldar major looking down at that which lay about the battered gate.

She saw the wooden door had actually been forced open and held by a log thrust through from outside. She saw the ring of Halali dead which lay around that gap. And she saw the body of a man in khaki, stretched in the gap, still facing the enemy, with a rifle and fixed bayonet beside it. . . .

"We did what we could by fire from above, sahib," the risaldar major was saying, "but had it not been for this gallantry, they must have forced an entrance. There be fifteen Halali dead here."

But she heard no more, for she was on her knees beside all that was left of her husband and Alison drew the risaldar major aside that they might not witness her grief.

WHEN they were back on the gallery, the major faced his Indian officer. "And now, the truth, Risaldar Major Sahib," he said curtly.

"The truth, sahib?"

"Aye, the truth. Oh, fool, could I not see that all the Halali dead at the gate had perished, not by the rifle and bayonet we found there, but from sabre cuts?"

The risaldar major shifted his feet unhappily. At last:

"It is so, sahib. I will tell all. When there was a lull in the fighting at the gate, I chanced to look down and saw the stranger sahib creeping out of the post.

"I thought he might have some scheme whereby he should retrieve his honor; there was a gun up the nullah to our left front which could have been put out of action by a determined man armed with a few bombs.

"I was pleased, for I had taken an interest in the sahib since thou hadst put him in my charge. So I followed him, hoping to give him aid.

"We passed among the dead scattered beneath the wall and, still unknowing of my presence, he turned into the nullah where stood the gun. But there he stopped, under the cover of a rock, and I waited out of sight for him to go for-

ward again. But, as he remained there for some little time, I crept round the rock to investigate. And there I saw a Halali bending over a khaki-clad figure at his feet and I thought the sahib had been killed and was being mutilated by his slayer. So, sahib, I struck.

"But when my victim's face was turned to the sky I saw that the supposed Halali I had killed was the sahib and that he had changed clothes with the dead tribesman over whom he had been bending."

Alison wondered what crazy plan had been evolved by the terror driven mind of Ronnie Swain. Perhaps he had tried to stage his own death. The body in his clothes would be past identification after one night in the open, when the jackals had finished with it. And if by chance it survived the night, the hot sun of India does its work rapidly. Or perhaps fear of being trapped had driven him to attempt an escape, dressed as a native, towards the relieving column, although this would require a good deal of explanation later. The first idea was the more probable; to return as friendly native to civilization and then a fresh life, free from the accusing eyes of Valerie . . . the man had nothing to lose.

"If I have done wrong, sahib, I must face my court-martial," the risaldar major continued. "But there was little time to think, either when I struck the blow that killed him, or later.

"I would have tried to get back with the sahib's body and his clothes, for it would not be well that the sahib's clothes should be found on a Halali outside the post, but there was no time to strip the man. A band of tribesmen had seen us and were trying to cut us off. So I seized both bodies and ran for the gate, dragging them after me. It was but a short distance, but I was nearly overtaken; so close were they that one was able to throw a log within the gate before I could close it. So I turned and fought, sahib, and thou knowest with what result.

"The main attack started just then and the men on the gallery above me drove it off with their fire. And after it was over I so arranged things that the sahib, again in his own clothes, lay among the dead in the gate. But my sword I could not leave him, so I threw down the rifle and bayonet that disclosed all to thine eyes. Have I done wrong, sahib?"

"Why didst thou this thing?" Alison asked softly.

"Sahib, it was once a man. It is not well that any woman should think ill of her man. And I had seen the mem-sahib look at him as though he were beneath contempt, as indeed, sahib, he was. But now she thinks well of him and that is as it should be between man and wife."

"Thou hast done wisely," said Alison, laying his hand on the Indian's shoulder.

But later he wondered. For Valerie could not forgive herself for so misjudging her gallant husband, and felt the only way she could atone for her cruelty was by dedicating her life to his memory. And Major Mark Alison is still a bachelor.

The Texas man was fast.

NIGHT RUNNER

by Raymond S. Spears

"RIDE?" a voice hailed.

Cave Parosh, plodding along the TCB road, lifted his head in surprise. Many cars had passed him by, though it didn't matter. He wasn't going anywhere; just going, rather than remain a burden on his family.

The car was a fine, stream-line eight-cylinder. Under the wheel crouched an evil little genius wearing a cap, his countenance excessively sharp-featured—like a jockey, but obviously overweight. In the rear seat were two men, one smooth-shaven, flattish-faced, narrow-eyed; the other fox-faced. Parosh hesitated, glancing down at his bundle of a blanket wrapped in a tarpaulin.

"Why, yes-s," he nodded. "It'd be a nice change."

He ran around the head of the machine to the front seat and dropped his pack on the deck between his legs.

"Smoke?" one of the men behind him asked.

"I used to smoke, but lately I couldn't afford enough to eat, really, so I cut it out."

"Flat, eh? Where from? We'll stop't a lunch and fill you up."

"Van Wert. My name is Cave Parosh. Never mind stopping. I had a real breakfast—all the shell-bark hickory nuts I could eat. Topped off with plenty wild apples. I'm all right."

"I've heard of living thataway. On

the road, eh? We know about that, ourselves. We're root buyers—medicinal wild stuffs. Maybe you know outdoor stuff, eh?"

"Why, I've hunted and fished a lot," Cave answered.

"Drive a car? Yeah? Give it to him, Tobb."

Parosh took the wheel, asking, "How fast?"

"Forty-five—no hurry!"

Parosh lifted the machine along, carefully through the frequent towns, watchful at the crossings, sure at the stops and corners.

"Open up!" a voice ordered at a long straightaway, and after they passed eighty miles per, came "Aw-ri!"

An odd exultation thrilled the wanderer. These men needed a spare chauffeur, and plodding on his way the drag of loneliness had been hardest to bear. Moreover, autumn frosts and falling leaves had afflicted him with the feeling of coming winter.

They stopped at a drug store. They stopped at a cabin on a creek bottom. They ate dinner in a woods clearing, and by the talk Parosh learned that these three men were doing business all along the way. Every settlement or town took one or another into a doctor's office, a drug store, or a crossroads commissary, and but for the sun Parosh would have lost his sense of direction, for they not only followed the concrete, but swung out into dirt and muck byways which, Tobb said, a rain made fierce.

Presently Parosh knew that Burd Macane was the leader, Hacky was his assistant, and Tobb, the jockey, was utility man, the group a kind of partnership. Wherever night overtook them they stopped—in tourist camps, at farm houses. In St. Louis Macane and Hacky went to a hotel and Tobb, with Parosh, went on to Kansas City, where a greasy, hump-shouldered man in a trunk-cabin cruiser showed Parosh navigation on the Missouri River. They ate in the galley, slept in bunks, and had a wonderful time afloat. Grins baffled Parosh's curiosity. Tobb just said he would find out fast enough, the boys knew what they were about.

Parosh helped Tobb; he had learned a lot about handling little river power boats. He was keeping the automobile in tiptop condition. Tobb knew a lot about motors, and he was telling Cave fine points every day—out of the corners of his mouth. Cave didn't even know the name of the mechanic who showed him marine motors, river navigation.

TWO weeks later they picked up Macane and Hacky in the car at St. Louis. "You're hired," Macane said, "Here's a century—so far." This was thirty dollars a week.

Important business had been transacted—wholesale stuff, Macane said. They were expanding, working below the Ohio and over into the upper Tennessee valley—good herb-and-root country. All they had to do was send out to pick up the big-bundle stuff with trucks. The little extracts and manufactured things they handled more or less direct.

In Terre Haute, Macane told Parosh to go down to Mendova with a little roadster. This was, he said, a rented machine, and he would pick up the company car at the Furdale Garage in Mendova. Furdale would have word where to meet them, next.

"Here's expense money," Macane handed him a roll of curreney. "Don't take any chances on wet clay—it'll sure slew you slick. Another thing, look out for hijackers. Seeing you alone, they might waylay you. Bad actors along those pikes. You got a gun? You can shoot—you've hunted?"

Parosh shook his head. "No gun. But my father and I hunted lots."

"Put this shoulder scabbard on," Macane said. "It's a .22 high-velocity—don't fool yourself it isn't good. Here's lots of clips—use it if they slap at you.

Don't flash it—short guns ain't popular with the Law. Here's the map."

The first night Parosh stopped at Turtle House Camp. A slender, smiling man was just walking up to town for supper. "Go with Mist' Snaden," the manager said, "He knows the way."

"Fine!" Parosh welcomed companionship, and the two walked into the town, with dim street lights, small stores, thickly-curtained windows.

"Theh's good hunting down thisaway," Snaden said. "Quail, some ducks, lots of squirrels, coons, possums—plenty good shooting. You shoot?"

"Back home I did, quite a bit."

"Back home—down East?"

"Ohio—Van Wert." And frankly Parosh told of being poor, and the way things were. "I was lucky," he went on. "The second day out I happened to be picked up and I've a job, driving cars for medicinal herb and essential oil collectors."

"For root diggers—buyers, you mean?" Snaden asked.

"Why, they buy and ship herbs and roots—domestic ginseng and golden seal—field buyers."

"Essential oils?"

"Yes—that and perfume stock."

"And they ship?"

"Oh yes. They have places where they make up the packages and send them to the big establishments, or wherever."

"Freight or express, I suppose?"

"Why, I don't know. Of course, I'm just a hired driver," Parosh said. "Tobb does their driving, and they send me around, like this trip. They had a breakdown and towed into Mendova. They were in a hurry, so they borrowed a machine and they sent me down to get their car, and return this."

"Do you like chicken?" Sneden asked, and Parosh sure did.

Two days later Parosh rolled into the Furdale Garage in Mendova. Furdale was a stocky man, hardly five feet six. He wasted no words.

"You meet Macane at the shanty-boat on the eddy below the falls. Keep out of the city. It's all right to do the main road to Highland Park, but you swing west theh, and go the back, dirt roads. Travel nights—watch out. Anybody snoots in on yo', slug 'im. If he's nasty, bang him and move fast. Keep yo' mouth shut."

Travel nights—there was the map. An itinerary told Parosh where to fill with gas. He was to go east a hundred miles or so out of his way, and then roll north. Furdale said it was rough country.

This repaired car was a year old. It had cost money, and could it go! Before he knew he was going good, Parosh was astonished to find himself riding nearly eighty miles an hour. Good rubber, perfect motor, road-clinging. . . . He slowed down, a gray ghost of a car with powerful lights. He struck the rolling country, followed the Bottoms-Mountain Road, and had to turn back for miles because he was past the north turn before he knew it. At night the light of flaming fireplaces in cabins, the darkened houses, the quiet and dimly-visible villages were lonesome. His orders stopped him before dawn when he came to the sign;

PEARLING WATERS CAMP

But for orders he would have gone on to the Ohio River and the shanty-boat. The camp proprietor was a gray, wispy little man, with a brow all wrinkled, his little eyes squinty slits. "Don't yo' register," he told Parosh. "Yo' ain't pay business."

Lying away in a cabin, Parosh could but wonder about this business that hired him. He couldn't understand it. It paid well. Every one ran around a lot. Nobody talked much. In one way he enjoyed the traveling up and down, but the gun under his arm and the blackjack he carried on the seat beside him, under a flap, gave him pause. He was to fight—whack and shoot "bad actors."

THE Pearling Waters tourist stopping place had a score of cabins and a dozen house cars. A big creek emptied into the Cumberland River. High limestone bluffs, snarly looking woods, small, poverty-stricken farms, and mean weather prevailed thereabouts. Rain, chill and drizzling, fell all day long and all the eating that Parosh could find was stale peanuts, old popcorn and poor candy.

Down in the corner of the grounds by themselves were two tin-can outfits, with tents and slattern women and shacky men, who looked over their shoulders and watched every one. Two respectable families, caught in the storm, just didn't belong there—nice, puzzled and worried people. Over at the entrance in the No. 1 cabin were two men and these were crooks. Even Cave Parosh recognized them as an evil breed.

He felt their watchful stares—knew that out of all the others, they were looking him over. He had from his wages nearly one hundred dollars, besides eighty dollars in expense money. His spare clothing was in a suitcase. He was ill at ease, bothered by that insistent surveillance, which he could not understand. They couldn't know him—but they stared at that fine automobile. Probably they thought he was rich. For poor devils of wanderers even one hundred and eighty dollars must seem like quite a lot of money.

Toward night they rolled away in their sedan, which was stained and messy, yet the motor ran like an electric clock, good. They turned south and Parosh was relieved, feeling rid of them. At late candlelight he backed out of the side of his cabin, into the driveway and onto the highway. Rain was falling and to the music of the dripping on roof and windows he splashed and hissed on his way. Orders sent him on in the dark.

That hollow surrounded by culled, crooked trees had been depressing. Hungry for a real meal, Parosh felt better to be on his way. The road was narrow and pitted, old gravel fill and tarbound, and so rough that speed was out of question. The rain was turning the little runs into torrents, and some of the bridges were low, so that Parosh began to dread washouts. He was sorry he had not started early, but orders were orders and the Pearling Waters Camp manager would have told on him.

His headlights showed woods, tiny clearings with rail, stump or pole fences, and he had glimpses of cabins, old and poor. Gardens were weedy, corn was shocked and thin, and little orchards were scrawny on steep slopes. Ahead was tobacco land. Suddenly a red light flashed on, swinging back and forth. Two men stood in front of a car, crosswise in the road.

The signal, two hundred yards ahead of him, gave him time to think. Dropping his hand to the blackjack, he eased the pressure on the accelerator and stopped forty yards or so from the machine that blocked the road. It was stalled between a bluff ledge on the right and a steep fill down to a wide, shallow brook on the left. Now he recognized that car. It was the outfit of the two men who had gone south from the Pearling Waters Camp. Circling, they had headed him.

He was in for it. He could see a revolver in the hand of one, an automatic pistol in the hand of the other. Red handkerchiefs were tied over their faces; there could be no mistake about them.

"A stickup!" Parosh thought, and jerking the emergency brake, he stepped into the storm, drawing that fine, short-barreled ten-shot automatic Macane had given him.

The two men dashed clumsily at him, lunging and coming with awkward haste, flinching, seeing him despite the glare of the headlights in their eyes, lifting their guns and shooting as they came. They were running over rough footing and the bullets went high.

"They're fools!" Parosh choked. He aimed at the near one with a quick thrust, letting go and shooting again at the other. Back and forth he let go slugs. Shooting table meat with a shotgun, knowing the fine points of proper gunmanship, stood him well in deadly midnight peril.

One gunman screamed out in agony at the burning thrust of a high-speed .22 slug. Dropping his revolver, he bounded over the bluff-bank, sprawled stumbling down into the brook, falling and crawling out on the far side like a wet dog, yelping in short, shrill yips as he staggered across the low bottoms. The other holdup let go panicky bullets from his heavy automatic. Parosh plastered him with a string of tiny bullets. He backed up, stood leaning against the stone ledge, legs braced, a silly smile revealed when his handkerchief slipped down, showing his thin, crooked, foolish face. Cackling for breath, he dropped his gun.

Running to the stalled car, Parosh let go the brake and rolled the obstruction over the edge into the brook. Back in his own machine, he saw one victim wabbly against the wall of stone; the other, like a huge black crab, out on the wet leaves on the bottoms. Sweating, gulping, yet exultant, Cave Parosh fled. The pouring rain had washed the tarred roadway. Miles away he stopped to clean his pistol, putting in a full clip. He had fired seven shots, and he found seven empties ejected into the car through the doorway. He threw these into the river at the next bridge.

Calm now, he knew those scamps must have known his itinerary. What they were after he wasn't sure. The little money he had was hardly lure enough. The car rumble was locked, which might hold the answer. Somebody had betrayed him—someone who knew the map he carried.

Rolling on, he passed little clearings in mountain timber. He passed dim settlements, saw lunchrooms "Open All Night"—but despite his longing for coffee, a snack, he scurried by with dimmed headlights. He wanted to be seen by no one on that desperate night ride.

"The less they know about me, the better off I'll be," he decided.

He was going now through tobacco country, farms with great drying sheds, towns with deserted streets and wet lights shining on quivering pavements. He saw gleaming cars standing dark at pool-rooms and other places of entertainment. If he stopped at all it was to study his map, make sure of the turns he was to take. For a hundred miles he met no one.

The gripping intensity immediately following his battle with the holdups relaxed. Clearly, treachery had let him into that ambush in the cutbank narrows. Burd Macane hadn't done that. Perhaps Tobb—perhaps Hacky—perhaps Furdale in the Mendova Garage knew what to expect.

Cave Parosh would keep his mouth shut on that night's experiences. No use talking.

At Highland Park he swung wide. Down at the Ohio off the roadway he found a big houseboat. He pulled out at the shacks on the bank, and immediately a door opened and Macane came running in the storm downpour to get into the car, carrying a suitcase.

"Let's go!" he said, and they rolled on into town.

THEY went to a restaurant on a side street, and had dinner. Roast mountain pork, dressing, gravy, hotbread. In his rush, Parosh had not been able to think of his hunger. Now it returned with a sudden grip.

"Good trip?" Macane asked over the table.

Parosh, with his eyes on the food, answered, "Oh, yes—all right." And then added about the rain, the wet roads, the dark nights.

"Who were at the Pearling Waters Camp?" Macane asked.

"Why, I didn't figure the register—none of my business," Parosh said. "I laid around the cabin all day. Soggy chill, sure enough. Nothing to eat. Stale peanuts—"

"You'd ought-a had a snack put up."

"I would another time. Don't know anything about that kind of country."

"We c'n make another run up the line," Macane said. "Liable to be snow, now, any time. How d'ye like it?"

"No kick coming," Parosh said. He could keep his mouth shut.

They crossed the Ohio and rolled north. The storm continued pouring down, with hardly a break. Macane knew the way. Main trunk lines was left for farmer milk road. Then they cut out into an east-west through pike. They angled east and north. They went clear to Toledo, no stop except for meals.

The drive through the raw, blasting downpour of a four-day norther seemed aimless. Macane was watchful, talkative about the casual glimpses along the way. "Getting late for herbs," he said, "we better get south!"

They stopped at garages, restaurants, drug stores, roadhouses, ramshackle places in wornout farm country. Macane carried the suitcase with him into many of the places. In others he brought away bundles and cartons. The big luggage compartment in the back of the machine was always locked. Parosh found himself wondering about that, after he had a glimpse of the contents of the load it carried, tins, cartons, varied containers.

They came to the Steel Raven, a duck-marsh roadhouse camp. There were Hacky and Tobb—though Macane had not hinted they were going to meet. The streams were up from the prolonged rains, the flight of waterfowl had gone on south, and the storm was ending in a sharp freeze and a fall of snow. Hacky and Tobb were nervous. They had separate cars. They were stained and gaunted by night and day traveling, the same as Parosh and Macane.

A tall, skinny, swamp-angel of a man was alone at the Steel Raven, amusing himself with a kennel of Chesapeake Bay retrieving spaniels. Parosh was shunted aside and the four others went into huddles, whispering when it seemed as though it must be miles to the next human in these low, skinned-timber river bottoms.

"Want-a go huntin'?" the camp-manager asked Parosh. "Grab a gun—skur'ls are in the new sun, an' runnin', right much! Git up on the ridges—nut trees theh!"

Parosh took a .22 automatic rifle, with ivory front and flat bar rear sights, a game bag and a box of shells. Wearing a borrowed pair of rubber hip boots, he strolled over to the river ridges, half a mile back from the cabin. Sure enough, in the culled timber he found, running, a lot of gray and fox squirrels. They were good hunting and the rifle was beautifully accurate. When he held right he got his game.

Strolling along in the sharp frost with the sun bright on the thin map-like patches of snow, showing the pattern of the woods canopy openings, he met a stranger, also a hunter, but carrying a long-barreled 20-gauge shotgun. The man had a flat gamebag. He wore a hunters' license button, though, and on the instant Parosh realized he was a violator of the game law.

"Good hunting?" the man greeted.

"Yes—oh, yes. Never did see so many squirrels."

"My eyes are not so good," the man blinked, "They blur on me when game is sitting still."

"They do that to any one." Parosh assured him, "Always hard to see when they're in a fork or stretched on a branch."

Another hunter drew near. It was Snaden, the hunting sport from the Turtle House Camp below the Ohio.

"Why, hello, Mr. Snaden!" Parosh greeted, and they shook hands, "Still hunting them, eh?"

"Yes, still hunting them," Snaden nodded. "If you had a silencer on that rifle you'd get more."

"It isn't mine," Parosh said. "Belongs to the Steel Raven Camp."

"Long Joe Heed?" Snaden asked.

"That his name?" Parosh asked, "Manager of the camp? I hadn't heard."

"How's business?"

"I don't know. Pretty good, I guess. Herbs wilted down and the season's about ended."

"Going to lay up for the winter, I suppose?"

"Probably."

"I missed you at Louisville," Snaden remarked, "You and somebody were just leaving the Wild Turkey Restaurant. I called, but you didn't hear me."

"That's too bad. I didn't stop there in town, only just to eat."

"Funny thing—it's a small world!" Snaden turned to his companion, "I met Parosh at the Turtle House. We ate supper together. I was in Louisville about a week later and there he was. Now here he is. You don't believe in coincidences, Larkey?"

"That's what I do believe in," the 20-gauge man grinned. "Looks like you've got a snap, running all over the country—if you like to ride around."

"I like it—and being able to earn wages," Parosh said. "I'm lucky—Picked up a job the first thing."

"Pays good, too?"

"Oh, yes—five a day and expenses."

"Well, better save your money. Good things don't last for ever," Snaden suggested.

"I know. My father's a construction engineer. All the work he could do one week—the next out of it."

"And you?"

"I worked with him summers all I could. Now I'm—" Parosh indicated his chauffeur job. "Looks like an education is a flop."

The two gazed at him as he looked away. The job was good—he was tickled to death to have it—yet he was fit for greater responsibilities and larger accomplishment. Snaden started to suggest he would hit into something according to his abilities and training, but checked himself. When Parosh glanced quickly at him. Snaden's eyes were narrowed, hard.

THE hunters separated, but the zest of sport was gone for Parosh and he circled back to the marsh camp. He had seven squirrels, three of them the big fox reds. He took them into the kitchen and a minute later Long Joe Heed came in from outside. He had a carbine 25-35 rifle.

"I got a mess!" Parosh exulted.

"Yeah, I seen yo' did," the manager nodded, going through and upstairs where Macane and the two others were playing cards. Macane came down while Parosh was skinning and dressing his victims.

"Got some nice ones, eh?" Macane said, "You can hunt and shoot, eh?"

"I was lucky—fellow back on the hills with a pretty automatic shotgun didn't have a one—eyes poor and couldn't see them. They're all over."

"Who was he?"

"Why, le's see—oh, yes! Snedan called him Larkey."

"Snaden?"

"Yes—one of those sports who run all over, hunting. I saw him down on the Tennessee in Kentucky. Must be nice to be rich, run all over hunting in season—"

"Yes, it'd be nice being that rich," Macane said, absently. "Say where he was going from here?"

"Why, no."

"What'd you tell him?" Macane led the way clear of the others.

"I told him I was sure glad to have a job."

"Keep on being glad, boy!" Macane

said, "We got lots of competition in our business. They want-a muscle in on us. If they don't get our markets they hijack us. Maybe they tail us to get a line on our grafts."

"That's why I have to run nights—so they can't stick up the car?" Parosh exclaimed, "I wondered about that. You're right, too."

"Right—how's that?"

"Why, two men were at the Pearling Waters—hard eggs," Parish answered, "They had an open car, camp outfit. They tried to stop me."

"Theh't Sloppy Run? What happened, boy? How come—did you—?"

"Why, they had the machine across the road, on the cutbank," Parosh said. "It was raining and they red-lamped me. I stopped. They came at me with red handkerchiefs over their faces. I recognized their outfits—they began to shoot, so I—" he hesitated.

"And boy, did you shoot!" Macane grinned, with thin lips, "You know, we've been—everybody's trying to figure what the hell happened." Macane chuckled. "And c'n you keep your yap shut!" he nodded. "You'll do! Talk all you want—but don't say anything."

"I just figured it was no use bothering you about it. They were crooks—I didn't mean to—no use mixing up with sheriffs and coroners."

"I get you," Macane nodded. "I told the boys you got a lot of what it takes. Funny part of it is, they didn't even find the slugs in those hijackers. Bucky, he fell in the run and drownded. Shanes, he was alive but he couldn't talk. They got the machine out the creek—couldn't find a damned thing from it. Boy, and did you cover up! How come?"

"I never stopped till I picked you up."

"No east—java—*nothing?*"

"You know how empty the gas tank was—we filled in Louisville."

"Huh—and we thought maybe you wasn't wise!" Macane shook his head, "Cripes! You bump down two hijacks and forget it! I know you were good."

"Well, I told you—"

"That shows you ain't so dumb." Macane looked at him. "You know when to shut up and when to open up. Lot's never know that. Hacky—he rides with you tonight. Don't let him put nothing over on you, see? You go to Chattanooga, understand? Lots-a lonely going any way you take it Hacky's got ideas about you, Cave. Look out! Don't tell him nothing. Get me?"

AFTER dark Hacky backed a powerful roadster out of the big club garage and Cave Parosh swung in beside him. Instead of going out to the main thoroughfares, they rolled the side roads where at times and in places fifteen miles an hour was too fast. Deep and high in the Cumberlands they came to a valley community where Hacky had a garage oil, grease and go over the machine. With Parosh he lurked and skulked through alleys, back streets, from poolroom to lunches to blind tigers.

"Get this!" an incautious whisper reached the keen ears of Parosh. The speaker, he saw, was gaunt, narrow-shouldered, wide-hatted; with a tiny face. His companion was a two hundred pounder with flat face, piggy eyes and stolid composure. The two presently slipped away like a lumbering bear and a slinking gray wolf. And Cave Parosh knew that Hacky had then and there put the finger on him.

"Let's go!" Hacky said.

They swept into the Holston, down the Tennessee, over into the Clinch Valley, and paused, as if for a moment, on the table mountain across from Look Out Mountain, taking a snack in a lunch amid the scrub oaks and bull pines. The girl behind the lunch counter glanced, as if startled, at Parosh. She turned as a rear door opened, and that precious pair of men, the gaunt hillbilly and his fat burly companion prowled in—with no sign of recognition.

Cave Parosh was ready for anything in this lonely retreat, but what happened was unexpected. A big-footed, oily-faced man came to the counter and shoved out four bottles, one at each of the patrons. Hacky laid out a dollar bill, the other two a silver dollar each. Cave Parosh looked up into the round, unshaven bootlegger's face.

"You buy—one buck!" the man snarled.

"You don't want me to buy," Parosh shook his head. "You don't know me. Next week, maybe something happens. Suppose I buy, and along comes somebody interfering with your business. Then you'll say I'm a damned skunk and tipped them off. Now, I don't know what's in this bottle—maybe cold coffee, maybe sweet wild grape juice, maybe sweet-honey water. If I'm a witness, I don't hurt you, if I don't taste that stuff. If I do, and I have to testify, next time I come through you'll gun me down. You ought to. Me—I've been tailed around. Maybe you know these others —" he tipped his head toward the two men and Hacky— "but that's none of my business."

The bottle dealer glared at the two, his eyes popping. He grabbed the two bottles, but didn't return the money.

"You get out!" he ordered and the two hastily backed away, blinking, and went out the back way to roll in their car.

The bootlegger shook hands with Parosh.

"Come again, stranger!" he said, "I won't fo'git this, no, indeedy!"

Hacky ate his fried chicken, silent and glowering, nonplussed. The girl's eyes twinkled.

"Mebby yo' know what you talked," Hacky spoke under his breath.

"Sure I know," Parosh answered sharply. "Looks like we've been mapped out, Hacky. Plenty heels around."

Having eaten, Hacky paid their shot, and the young woman flashed a quick, fair-warning glance at Parosh as they left.

"You're the first man who didn't buy in Scuppy's tiger, Cave. Why?" Hacky demanded.

"I got eyes and a memory," Parosh answered.

They turned over into the Turkey Health Springs, within half an hour. Here was a resort that had become a hide-out and was going to seed. They were giving a party that night, and in the candlelight clans gathered, with fiddler, banjo-picker, French harper. Eats and jugs. The girl from Scuppy's tiger came—and boldly coupled up with Parosh, as she was an odd number in the crowd.

"My name is Lou-Lee Windom," she told Parosh, who gazed at her Mother Hubbard dress, old-fashioned even in that hillbilly scouter place.

"My name is Cave Parosh," he told her, adding, "Everywhere I go!"

"Reckon yo' don't know yo'd better change it in the comp'ny yo' keep." She spoke sharply, and he saw that she was nervous, watchful.

"I've been wondering," he told her.

"Don't yo'uns liquor no where?" she asked. "How come?"

"You kindly give me a mighty fine partner," he said. "I'm a stranger in these parts, Miss Windom. I couldn't give you one as fitten, if I was liquoring."

"And I reckon yo' didn't want to have me see yo' drink at Scuppy's?"

"Didn't seem like you belonged there," he retorted. "Maybe that was my way of making a play."

"Shu-u!" she breathed, "That might be, too! Yo' looked at me—an' turned Scuppy down. Made him grateful, too. Mebby yo' are deep! But—" she gripped his arm sharply— "mind yo' eye, Cave Parosh! They're picklin' trouble fo' yo!"

"I've no bad friends—"

"Don't fool yo'se'f!" she warned. "Men here fear yo'. Yo're good an' don't think yo' wasn't brought here for nothing, suh!"

"Why, I'm just a hired man—chauffer—earning wages."

"Hacky's given the word around yo're Federal—spy—revenuer—"

"He's mistaken—I mind my own business!"

"I know better'n yo'll eveh know anybody!" she whispered, "If'n yo'd be'n a Federal yo'd bought shine of Scuppy. Instead yo' fair-warned him. Yo' friends plan meanness—an' Scuppy's yo' friend. Those two fellers are bad, swamp angels. They'll git yo'—Hacky'll run. Yo've no backer, they think."

"Thanks a million, Lou-Lee Windom!" Parosh said. She shuddered while the strident music of the fiddle, banjo and French harp throbbed quivering through the dark. Lou-Lee Windom hated killings in the bresh. "They ain't right!" she declared, quick with feminine sympathy and indignation, and Parosh agreed.

"It'd serve those base murders right if'n they got the worst of it!" she urged. "That Slim Jim scoundrel is Salt Grass. The big fellow is Tarheel Bindle. Hacky brings fellers into the back country, an' they do the meanness. Hacky tol' me to git yo' plumb keerless so's they c'n pick a fuss with yo'."

"Wouldn't do me any good to run out!" Parosh spoke under his breath, and she heard him.

"No, I don't reckon 'twould," she said. "Ain't no betteh place to get shut of scoundrels! Let them start hit—these mountang fellers'll mind their own business. Soon's hit starts, Hacky'll double-cross yo', to make hit certain. Keep yo' face to those men—all the time!"

SHE mingled her dialects, Parosh noticed, hillbilly mountang with out-yonder city, but as a girl she was plumb sure faithful. He could not quite figure her out, only that she was watching out for him—and though the odds were three to one, having her watch made him feel as though the odds were even.

And as Parosh walked onto the floor at the end of a dance, to take the place at the head of a square dance set, Salt Grass came surging across the floor with Tarheel, both their breaths strong of moonshine.

"Hi-i," the lanky one snarled. "What yo' stealin' my place—my gal for?"

"Because you are not fitten!" Parosh exclaimed, lifting out with his fist. Salt Grass, hit in the stomach, staggered back and then the two pulled their guns. The Texas man was fast but Tarheel Bindle was slow. For an instant Parosh thought he was gone, but his first bullet beat Salt Grass, who was stunned; and his second hit Hacky in the throat as the fellow drew his gun, too, where he lurked in a shadow ready to throw treacherous lead.

Hacky gaped, panic-stricken and mortally wounded, beaten at his own desperate game, surprised—and then Tarheel Bindle wabbled his big nickle-plated 45-six into view, fumbling for the hammer and the trigger. A big man, two high-speed slugs from Pharoh's .22 just seemed to dent him, but a third dragged down his strength.

"Come on! Come on!" The girl seized the elbow of Parosh, "We got to get goin'. I came with those fellows—I'm leavin' with you!"

Parosh glanced around. Hacky had fallen forward on his face. Salt Grass was all drawn up on his side, shaking his head as if to rid his eyes of the dark. Tarheel Bindle was stepping around, staggering and kicking out, trying to keep his balance on his feet, his mouth bubbling blood.

"They're through!" Lou-Lee whispered. She thrust Parosh into the night. They ran around the cabin and she led the way along the footpath over the hogback mountain, down to a car hidden in the brush.

"Our car's back a piece!" she said, "Turn the way you came. I'll tell you what—Lawse, Cave Parosh, you're good!"

Back in the roadway they rolled half

a mile under the pines and then she stopped him.

"You got plenty money?" she asked.

"Plenty," he said.

"Know where yo're going? Not Mendova—but the boat?"

"That shanty-boat below Louisville?" he asked.

"That's where—" she hesitated. "If anything is wrong theh, you head for Mendova. Look out for Furdale. He's treacherous. Palura—he's in Mendova, too—will talk to you, right. He don't mix in, none. He's got his own grafts. I'd like to go with you, but that's what they expect on the mountang. That'll be the talk, me'n you together. Boy—I neveh saw anybody colder'n you, fighting three to one! You don't look it—Hacky figured yo'd be soft. Soft! Lawses, he was hid in back—and you took him, 'fore you did that big fool Tarheel! Good-by, Cave. Mebby Macane's reliable—I don't know."

"I wish I could do something for you for warning me, Lou-Lee!" he urged.

"Don't you call freein' me anything?" she spoke tensely, "Those scamps tricked me into transportin' moonshine, violating the law."

"You fair-warned me—saved my life. I didn't know their game—"

"That's so, sho' nuff!" she laughed, the first hard woman's laugh he knew the meaning of. "So hit's quits, all even up! Be seeing you, boy—sometime when hit's safe enough. Now you get a-goin'! First trade guns with me, suh. Mine's the same as yourn. These mountang sher'fs snoop plenty and have got the idee of tracin' bullets to guns. S'long—a kiss, suh, if'n yo' don't mind mine—rememberin' hit—"

"Mind yours!" he whispered, holding her.

THE trail to Louisville seemed a short run, this second trip to it. The big cabin-boat, moored to the bank with short bow and long stern lines, was sparred off by a gang-plank. Parosh hailed from the top of the bank. Burd Macane came out to greet him.

"Come aboard!" Macane said, looking at the empty car, "Looks like you dropped Hacky somewhere along?"

"Yes, I dropped him," Parosh answered.

Macane gazed at him. Going to the machine, he looked all around, and then unlocked the rumble flap. After studying the diverse load he turned and closed it.

"Then you met up with Lou-Lee, eh? She's reliable."

"Is that part of it, Macane?" Parosh asked.

"Oh, yes, a sure big part of it, Cave," the man assured him. "She's bright—knows what is what. Don't ever try to fool her, boy."

"I wouldn't. I saw her. I didn't know she was in on the load."

"You wouldn't know," Macane hesitated, "I thought Hacky'd come back without you. She wanted it fixed dif'rent?"

"I wouldn't know what she wanted, Mac."

Parosh warmed his hands over the stove in the cabin. Macane had been waiting three days for the car to come. He seemed greatly relieved, well satisfied with the business.

"We're through for this season," he told Parosh, "You drop down to Mendova. Just keep out of sight. I'll get word to you when we begin work in the spring. Palura'll post you when the time comes. Here's—"

He handed Parosh a roll of currency. The top bill was a sawbuck. Inside were centuries. As soon as they had eaten, Macane sent Parosh onto a small house-boat, perhaps twenty feet long and seven feet wide, with a deep hull and two six-horse outboards set in the stern. The boat was comfy, outfitted inside. Counting the outboards it was a six hundred dollar job. Macane cast off the single bow line and Parosh swung

around in the reverse eddy to float off down the Ohio, surprised at the summary dismissal.

But he was relieved. The whole set-up was wrong. The only reference he found to the desperate fight back in the mountains was in a Mendova newspaper he picked up at Evansville, which read;

> Baroque Court, Nov. 8th:
> Sheriff Pauley received word this morning that at a dance in Short Pine Mountain a desperate battle was fought over a hill country belle. A stranger disputed with two men known as Salt Grass and Tarheel Bindle. All three were shot down and killed. Pauley learned that the girl immediately left the Mountain for parts unknown. The merrymakers were reticent, declaring they knew nothing about the matter, and it was none of their business. The three men were buried in one grave in the Short Pine Cemetery, where so many have been buried after mountain disputes.

Cave Parosh was amazed. The item said that "A stranger disputed with two men known as Salt Grass and Tarheel Bindle"—as if Hacky and the bad actors had fought! Not a hint that one man killed the three! Surely, Fortune could have done a killer no better turn than that.

On his boat, Parosh was bewildered and grateful. He was honest. Of course he pleaded self-defense against the jeering of his conscience. Legally, as a matter of right, he was blameless. But for the rest he was gripped with uneasy dread.

A hunch warned him to find out whether he was all in the clear, or not. He ran into the mouth of a creek and moored in a slough hidden in a swamp bottom. He went back to the bank of the Ohio and with a pair of binoculars he watched the boats dropping down in the late autumnal migration into the Lower Mississippi—skiffs, outboard launches, motor boats, shanty-boats, cabins on scows.

An open launch came down, driven by inboard power. A hood was over most of the length. In the stern sat two men, one running the boat and the other searching the shores and watching the other boats.

"Snaden!" Parosh recognized the man with the glasses. The other one was Larkey. "They're looking for me, I bet. Where's Macane?"

They looked into the little slough mouth, but a tree top floating in the cut looked as if nothing could get past it—that fooled them. That is, if they were were looking for Cave Parosh in his cabin boat, he was well behind them, now. The sight of them gave him cold chills.

Cave Parosh took his time down the Ohio and Lower Mississippi. He mailed home five hundred dollars, with his love and good wishes. He gave the folks no address. Down the river he landed in lonesome bends and in the vacancies of chutes and amid the far-spreading sandbars. At New Madrid he obtained newspapers and magazines for reading.

With an odd, far-away feeling, he turned to the events of a great continent. And then a front page picture snatched his attention like the bite of a steel trap:

DOPE CHIEF CAPTURED

The picture included Burd Macane, alias Jerald Clipes, alias Stain Griffin. He had been taken just as he changed airplanes in the Straffing Field. He had two suitcases full of illicit drugs and $30,000 in cash on his person. The authorities were disappointed because they had not caught Jason Happing, alias Hacky, and John Doe and Richard Roe, who had given them the slip in the Tennessee valley country.

With Macane were two government men, Terence Larkey and Reed Snaden. The newspaper report did not mention Burd Macane's chauffeur nor hint the name of Cave Parosh. Shaken and dismayed, sure at last of his participation

in the infamous traffic in narcotic drugs, Parosh looked at his hands, and in imagination saw steel wristlets on them.

GOING his dread and extremity, he cut loose and did not tie again till he swung into the Mud Bar Eddy at Mendova. Landing, he made fast and headed for Palura's, a big converted cotton warehouse, an emporium of entertainment. In the rotunda a burly man gazed at him, blank in expression.

"Mr. Palura?" Parosh greeted.

"If'n you ain't got a warrant or gun for me," Palura assented.

"I'm up against it," Parosh said, "Lou-Lee Windom and Burd Macane—"

"I'll say you're up against it!" Palura nodded. "Macane didn't squeal. He pleaded guilty. Nothin' about you, but that don't let you out. We better go to the custom house. You're a saphaid f'r luck, maybe. Maybe the jury'll consider the motive. Cain't tell."

Palura called the custom house on the telephone, and made an appointment. Snaden was at the desk, Larkey in a corner when they entered the office.

"Why, hello, Cave!" Snaden greeted cheerfully. "Squirrel hunting lately?"

"Oh, yes—Columbus hickories—along down the river," he answered, gulping and shaken.

"Now, Cave, just what has been going on, anyhow?" Snaden asked.

Parosh told him. He began when he left home, the job offer, and went on through the holdup and the mountain dance battle.

"Boy, that was fighting," Snaden assured him. "Right there you sure did a good job. Better than you know. You cleaned up a dirty mess, right. Hacky was Jason Happing. Grass and Bindle were killers. You did a good killing and we were glad they were wiped out. Leave it lie. To confess would just make business for those mountain court lawyers, who would sell you out to the outlaws. How about the falling out over a girl? Who was she, Parosh?"

For a minute Parosh gazed at him. He shook his head. "I don't know. A girl was there—a stranger to me. Things moved so fast I couldn't figure them."

The two investigators glanced at him, and oddly enough, with approval. The office door opened and Lou-Lee Windom came walking in, cool and swagger as ever.

"So it was you left for parts unknown, Lou-Lee?" Snaden grinned. "A nice act, Lou-Lee. Let me introduce you to Cave Parosh."

She made a grimace at the undercover man, and then surveyed Parosh with the utmost indifference, turning to look at Snaden again as if curious to know what was ailing him.

"Now listen, Lou-Lee," Snaden said. "We checked all your reports and now we find that instead of those dope gangsters being all cleaned up, liquidated when they eliminated one another in a dispute about a hillbilly girl, one of the men involved made his escape. Now just what *was* your part in that matter?"

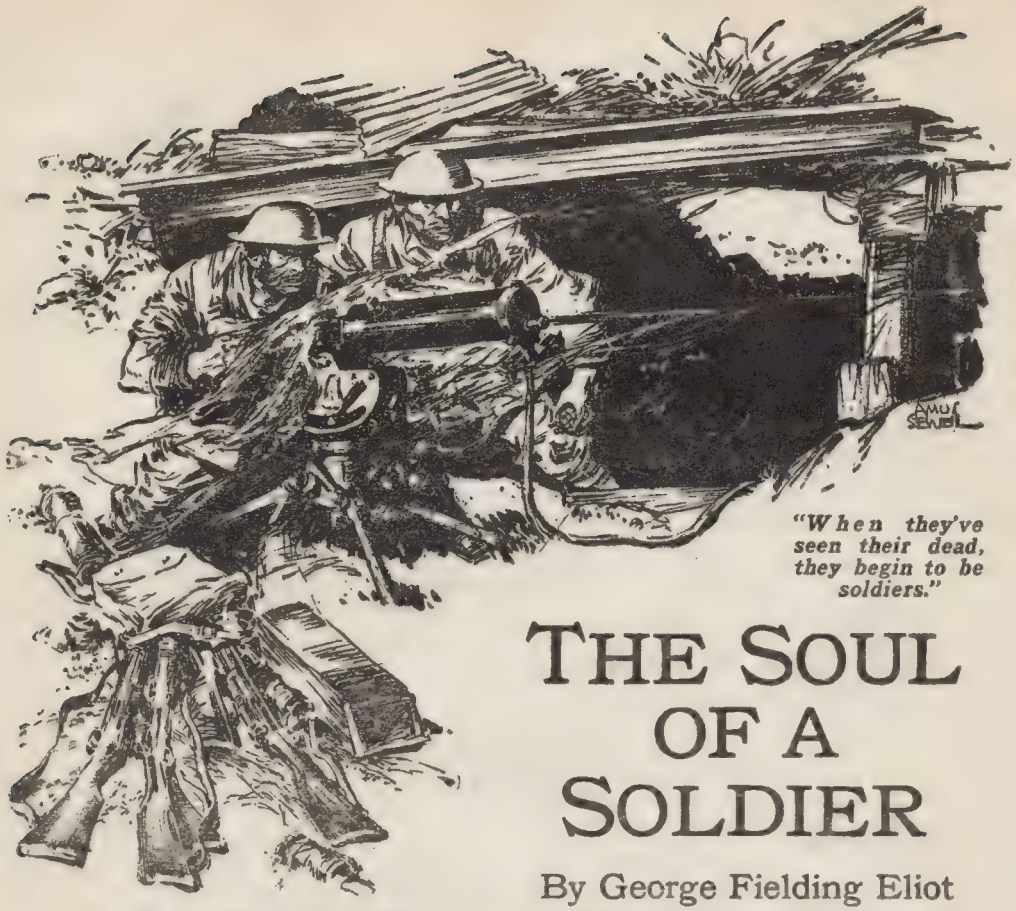
"My part, Snaden?" she hesitated, frowning. "I'll tell yo', Snaden, what it was. I saw a plumb innocent who was friendly, honorable, kindly, upright—and I gave him a break. That's what I did—fair-warning him to watch his step."

"That's exactly our understanding," Snaden nodded. "Nothing else you could have done in the circumstances. You knew he was suspected of being a Government man, and that Hacky had him on the spot."

"Time for dinner," Palura grinned. "I got a wild gobbler in the oven. Are you two hungry?"

"Hungry?" Lou-Lee cried, "I'm starved! Oh, I've been worrying about this—this boy—here!"

Cave Parosh colored up. "Nice to have a pretty girl worrying about me!" he said.



"When they've seen their dead, they begin to be soldiers."

THE SOUL OF A SOLDIER

By George Fielding Eliot
and R. Ernest Dupuy

(A fact story in two parts)

IT STARTED over the coffee and cognac, with the lone civilian listening while the rest of the gang, soldiers young and old, were batting them out through a tobacco smoke-screen. And it was the civilian—it would be, of course—who threw the bomb.

"What nation has the best fighting men?" was his innocent query.

The major grinned.

"You can't answer that one without stepping on toes. And you'll be very lucky if you don't get your nose punched in the bargain. What you're asking reaches down into the very soul of the soldier."

"Soul of the soldier!" said the civilian softly. "You know, that sounds damned interesting. Different armies, different souls. Different things that make 'em tick. There's a whale of a story in that somewhere."

"More than one, I'd say," the major chuckled. "But not to be written by bright young men on the outside looking in. Like the one who went to Addis to cover the Ethiopian mess and wrote the piece about what he called the picturesque British Legation guard—adding a crack to the effect that of course, while good enough against marauding savages, they would be useless against regular troops.

"Hah! There's one for you. That guard was composed of picked men from the 4th Battalion of the 8th Punjab Regiment—the old 92d Prince of Wales' Own Punjabis, before they got this new system of numbering in the Indian Army—a regiment with 136 years of honor-

able history. They've got Mahsidpur and Burma, Ahghanistan and China on their colors—yes, and Loos and Helles and Kut-el-Amara and Bagdad.

"No good against regular troops, eh? Pity the man who wrote that didn't see the Indian troops go in with the bayonet at Neuve Chapelle. I did. So did Fritz, and Fritz could tell the writing gentleman a thing or two about how good they are. The 2d Battalion of the 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles was actually the first unit to enter the village of Neuve Chapelle on that bloody day, out-distancing the British units on either flank; and just to give you an idea of what sort of lads *they* were, one lone five-foot Gurkha went charging into a house from which heavy firing was coming, cowed into surrender and brought out at the point of his bayonet no less than eight husky Germans—at the sight of which the 2d Rifle Brigade, which was just then coming up, gave the little chap three rousing cheers. The corps commander afterwards remarked in General Orders that this was probably the only instance in British history of an individual Indian soldier being cheered for his bravery by a British battalion in the midst of an action."

The lieutenant's eyes were glowing.

"Neuve Chapelle!" he said softly. "Back in '15, wasn't it? *That* was a battle. I wish I'd been there."

"A bloody, mismanaged mess, youngster," snapped the major. "Count yourself lucky you were safe at home in your diapers."

"Talking of the Indian Army," said the civilian craftily, "I think I read somewhere that something like seventy percent of the population of India is useless for recruiting purposes, having through centuries of subservience lost all their military virtues. I wonder if there are any European peoples like that? No good as soldiers, I mean?"

"Stuff," rumbled the colonel, "and nonsense! Soldiers are soldiers. Of course, some are better than others."

"That," murmured the civilian, "was what I was getting at. You were in the war, Colonel; so were you, Major. Which army had the best fighting material? Which people of today turns out the best soldiers?"

"Hrrmph," said the colonel.

"Big subject, that," muttered the major.

"You mean, after our own, of course?" suggested the lieutenant rather warmly.

The major laughed.

"Yea, Army!" he jeered kindly. "Always believe that, son, even if it isn't always true."

"Then you don't think that Americans were the best soldiers in the war?" persisted the civilian.

"Didn't say so, did I?" the major retorted. "Take Armistice Day. I'd venture a small bet that there was no division in any army, on that day, which was as good as our first or second divisions. Pershing said something like that, and he wasn't just talking out of pride. And yet I don't think any of our Corps, as a fighting machine, was equal to say, the Australians. We hadn't had enough practice with large commands yet; our staff and supply work wasn't smooth enough, our co-ordination between infantry and artillery wasn't up to their four years standard.

"There are so many things to be considered: leadership and discipline and experience— For instance, take our 35th Division: Missouri and Kansas National Guard—young, hot-headed, brave. All they lacked was experience. And so they opened the Meuse-Argonne with a headlong impetuous rush that carried them up to and even beyond the hellish Exermont Ravine.

"By that time all cohesion, all communication, had broken down and the remnants crumbled. It took the 1st Division ten days to re-conquer the same ground. They later found 35th Division men as far forward as Dead Man's Hill and as a Graves' Registration man said, 'They don't carry dead men forward.'

No, those boys went stumbling on until they died, futile victims of the valor of ignorance.

"Then take the 27th Division in Flanders. All sorts of pep and spirit. Right on to Berlin and let's hang the Kaiser, boys—that sort of thing. They had no time for such timorous suggestions about mopping up and limited objectives as were offered them by the Australians—veterans then, with whom they were, so to speak, brigaded. Result, they suffered hundreds of unnecessary casualties in their first attack from German machine-gunners who, in the absence of proper mopping-up parties, waited in their dugouts till the first waves went over and then popped out and shot the New York boys in the back. They learned about war from Fritz, though; they were all right later on.

Gurkha Rifles

"I'll tell you one thing, gentlemen, to get real discipline under fire, an outfit has to see its dead. *Then* they'll begin to take cover, and pay attention to gas discipline, and mop up as they go along, and all that sort of thing. When they've seen their dead, they begin to be soldiers. It was so with my own division; it was so with the 27th; it's so with all new troops."

"THAT'S mighty interesting," said the civilian. "I was afraid you were going to go on talking in terms of divisions and corps; what I wanted to get at was something like you've just said—something about fighting *men*, the soldier in the ranks, and his military qualities. What nation has the best? You gentlemen, between you, ought to be able to tell me."

"Might start at the other end," rumbled the colonel. "Of all the bad, worthless, no good soldiers on earth, give me the Chinese. When I commanded at Tien-Tsin, I saw some of 'em at war—civil war. They were sitting in a filthy ditch—a trench, they called it—with umbrellas over their heads. Umbrellas, sir! One of 'em had a rifle on the parapet above him, and every now and then he'd reach up, work the bolt, and pull the trigger without ever sticking his head high enough to take a sight. Soldiers! Hah!"

"And yet," murmured the major, "those same Chinese, under Ward and Gordon, made very fine soldiers in the Tai-oing show. Remember the Ever-Victorious Army, Colonel? And the storm of Suchow? And the desperate resistance of the 19th Route Army to the Japs at Shanghai in '32?"

"Hrrmph! Going ancient history on me, eh? Let's stick to the World War, then. You won't tell me the Portuguese were good troops?"

"I certainly won't," the major agreed. "They were rotten. But their discipline, their leadership, their supply were rotten too. Men know when they're well led. You can't fool John Doughboy about the qualities of his officers. When he has no confidence in 'em, he won't follow 'em. It doesn't follow that Portuguese are cowards. They proved otherwise in Vasco da Gama's day, to say

nothing of the Peninsula War under Beresford's leadership. Military history has hundreds of instances of poorly trained, poorly armed, half disciplined men fighting like heroes under a good leader; it has none that I can recall of good men fighting victoriously against odds under a bad leader."

"What about our lads at Saratoga under Gates?" put in the Lieutenant eagerly.

"Morgan and Arnold and Schuyler were there, too," the major replied.

"Courage, then, isn't the fundamental

Australian

necessity," the civilian suggested. "It's something else that gives an army its soul. Leadership."

"Not altogether," the colonel disagreed. "Now you take Lawrence and the *Chesapeake*. There was as good a fighting sea-captain as you could find, a leader who had been a positive inspiration to every man he had ever commanded. Yet he went to sea with a crew which wasn't trained, a ship which wasn't ready—and he was beaten by a better crew with a better ship; not by a better leader, though Broke was a good enough man."

"Leadership and training must go hand in hand, then?" the civilian mused.

"To a certain extent," nodded the major. "I don't think any nation has a monopoly of courage. All men fear death, or almost all. I don't think I have ever seen more than four or five soldiers whom I could call absolutely fearless. But most men have the guts to overcome that fear, and to fight for a cause they think worth fighting for. Such men, if well led and well trained, become what we call an army, or a regiment—for a regiment, too, has a soul. Any group of men banded together for the purpose of fighting for a cause can be said to have a corporate soul. It boils down to this: Man is by nature a predatory animal. Take a collection of men, give them proper training and leadership and the result will be a fighting unit."

"Wasn't that the real story of the "Rock of the Marne?" the lieutenant interjected. "That was a feather in our cap, wasn't it?"

"Check, son. The story of the 38th Infantry, of the 3rd Division; a story which Pershing called 'one of the most brilliant pages of our military annals.' The regiment, led by then Colonel, later Major General Ulysses G. McAlexander, met the German advance on the Marne, July 15, 1918—the drive which the Kaiser confidently expected would reach Paris and finish the war.

"Two German divisions moved in to roll over this single regiment. With flanks refused, that is, fighting not only to the front but to the right and the left, McAlexander stopped them cold. Informed by his brigade commander that he could fall back if necessary, but that the decision was up to him, McAlexander's reply was: 'Then I hold my line.' And he did. McAlexander was the 'Rock of the Marne.' I could talk all night on that fight, but what's the use? Here's one highlight, though. G Com-

pany, 38th Infantry, went into action 251 strong. It lost 199 killed and wounded and when the fight was over they buried 600 German bodies found in front of G Company. That fight was the story of a man, McAlexander, and a regiment. Superb leadership, intensive training."

THE Lieutenant had been itching to get in another word; after all, he was fresher from the study of military history than any of the others.

"You say leadership and training must go hand in hand. That's true, of course, sir. Yet both can be defeated by men who are whole-souled in their devotion to a sacred cause! Look at the French Revolutionary Army at Valmy! You cannot compare for a moment the experience and ability of the Duke of Brunswick as a commander with either the political opportunist Dumouriez or the elder Kellermann, who was an administrative rather than a field officer; nor can you compare the discipline and training of the Prussian army, still in the tradition of Frederick the Great, with the French of that day. Yet the French fought for liberty and won!"

Portuguese

The major grinned.

"Bravely spoken, son," said he. "But Valmy was a cannonade rather than a battle. The French artillery was the best in Europe; Gribeauval had seen to that, in the period between the Seven Years' War and the Revolution. It was still manned by its trained gunners; in fact, most of Kellermann's troops were old line regulars, less their noble officers, few of whom had ever actually led them in battle anyway.

"As for Brunswick, his heart wasn't in that fight. He was there out of loyalty to his king, but he did not believe in the justice of his cause. Had he pushed home his final attack, there'd have been a different story; but he could not bring himself, in my view, to pour out the blood of his countrymen in what he thought a bad quarrel. If you want an example of leadership and training on one side, and just devotion to a cause on the other, look at Bladensburg, where a handful of British regulars defeated several times their number of our militia, fighting in defense of our capital itself, without the smallest difficulty. Or consider the first Bull Run, where training was equally deficient on both sides, devotion equally high, but leadership all on the side of the South."

"You're certainly wandering far away from the World War, gentlemen," rumbled the colonel.

"What about Bunker Hill, and Braddock's defeat, and Lexington and Concord?" the Lieutenant demanded unheedingly.

"Bunker Hill is a case in point," nodded the major. "The British leadership there was incompetent beyond belief. Just because they had sustained a reverse in the Lexington-Concord affair, where their parade-ground tactics weren't equal to dealing with scattered riflemen behind casual cover, they felt that the honor of the British Army could only be wiped clean by a frontal

attack against these same riflemen behind entrenchments.

"They had only to send their lighter warships up the Mystic and take our people in the rear with an overwhelming fire; but no, they must do the job in the traditional bull-headed style. They paid for that mistake, and it was a mistake of leadership. As for Braddock, he was outclassed in leadership and training both, for the kind of war he was fighting and the kind of terrain he was operating in."

"It does seem to check up," the civilian observed. "Yet a just cause is a great help, you'll admit that?"

"Certainly, other things being equal," the major agreed.

"Then what about mercenaries? They've given a good account of themselves, time and again, in a cause where they were fighting only for pay," murmured the civilian.

"I think the value of mercenaries fighting only for pay is greatly overrated," the major answered. "The Swiss Guards of Louis XVI didn't do so well; nor did the Hessians in our Revolution. On the other hand, the outstanding classic example of a mercenary army is that of Hannibal, fired by devotion to a great commander, inspired by his character and leadership, and all but invincible.

"And in more modern times you have the French Foreign Legion, probably the most formidable fighting unit in the world at this moment—a unit whose soul is in its splendid traditions, its long and honorable history. Legionnaires don't fight for their miserable *sou* a day, and they don't fight for France; they fight for 'La Legion', with the spirit of its old-time motto, which ought never to have been changed—'*Valeur et Discipline*'. You may get the idea from the very attempt to change that motto on the colors to the motto borne by all other French regiments—'*Honneur et Patrie*'. The Legion complained. France was not their '*Patrie*'. And the authorities had to alter it, for the Legion, to '*Honneur et Fidelité*'."

The colonel chuckled, taking a little red-covered book from his pocket.

"Listen to this," he said. "' From living together, and obeying the same chiefs, from commanding the same men, from sharing fatigue and rest, from cooperation among men who quickly understand each other in the execution of warlike movements, may be bred brotherhood, professional knowledge, sentiment, above all unity. The duty of obedience, the right of imposing discipline and the impossibility of escaping from it, would naturally follow.' "

The colonel interrupted himself: "Doesn't that explain such units as the French Foreign Legion? Camerone, for instance? Bet you never heard the name. Yet Camerone Day is the Legion's annual festival. It commemorates a bloody day in Mexico—April 30, 1863—when Legion bayonets were trying to carve a throne for Maximilian. Three officers and fifty-odd men in a *hacienda*, holding out all day against a Mexican army. Duplicates our Alamo with this difference: when the three wounded thirst-choked survivors came staggering out to die, bayonet in hand, the Mexicans received them with honor. Danjou of the Wooden Hand led those men—a grizzled old captain whose right hand had been shot away in the Crimea. He died at Camerone. And his wooden hand is today in the Legion's Hall of Honor at Sidi bel-Abbes."

The major nodded. The colonel went on reading:

"'It is not that enthusiastic and thoughtless confidence of tumultuous or unprepared armies, which goes up to the danger point and vanishes rapidly, giving way to a contrary sentiment, which sees treason everywhere. It is that intimate confidence, firm and conscious, which does not forget itself in the heat of action and which alone makes true combatants.'

"Here's the punch—'Then we have an

army; and it is no longer difficult to explain how men carried away by passions, even men who know how to die without flinching, without turning pale, really strong in the presence of death, but without discipline, without solid organization, are vanquished by others individually less valiant, but firmly, jointly and severally combined'."

"I'm beginning to get it," admitted the civilian. "Remember, I used to play football. Teamwork does the trick. Who wrote that book?"

"Colonel Ardant du Picq, a French officer who served in Africa, the Crimea, and '70. He was also the first man who ever took serious interest in the psychology of the soldier. And when he fell in action, at the opening of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, he left behind him a mass of documentary notes, the reading of which is about the most eye-opening mental draught any soldier would want to quaff. This book—Du Picq's '*Etudes de Guerre*'—'Battle Studies' to you, debunked all the story-book, amateur flag-waving confraternity from Genesis to kingdom-come, way stations with thrown in. I'm lucky to have it with me. I've got to give a lecture to a group of young squirts like our friend here."

Turkish

"ME, I'm still interested in World War soldiers," the civilian persisted. "I can read military history in books; but right here in this tap-room I have two men who have actually led infantry soldiers in battle, who have seen soldiers of various nationalities undergoing the final test. I want to get down to bedrock."

"You've got us going," admitted the major. "I don't know how you did it—"

"Damned shaky business, comparing soldiers," the colonel said. "Now the Germans were good. No better. Nothing wrong with their discipline and leadership, even against hopeless odds."

"No," agreed the major heartily. "I remember one morning at Pozieres, in the first Somme battle; they came out of the mist and up an open hillside against our machine-guns, wave after wave of 'em. They must have known they couldn't make it; every man of 'em must have known it; yet they kept on coming until they were actually checked by the piles of their own dead. They had what it takes to make soldiers."

"Were those so-called 'shock troops'?" the civilian asked.

"No, they were regular line regiments of the Prussian 7th Division," the major said. "You know, there's a lot of misconception about this 'shock troop' idea. Let's examine it for a moment. You pick out certain of your best men to form a *corps d'elite*. What happens? You diminish the general quality of your army as a whole, you take away the men who should be your N. C. O. material, you give the ordinary regiments, on whom must be your chief dependence, an inferiority complex coupled with a jealous hatred of your special corps.

"It's an old idea, though; look at Alexander the Great's 'Companions'. Romans had none of that nonsense in the days of their real military glory;

the legions of Marius and Scipio were composed of Roman citizens and there were no 'shock troops' or 'guards brigades'. Later on, the British used to pick two of the ten companies of each infantry regiment for special distinction and give them the best recruits; the right wing company was known as the grenadier company, the left wing company as the light company."

Frequently these units were grouped for attacks, notably on the breaches in the walls of the old-time fortresses. But the results on the whole were not of the best.

"In the pre-war Russian Army, there were so-called 'rifle regiments' which got the better educated and more intelligent recruits; a tendency even in Republican France to assign the best recruits to the battalions of '*chasseurs a pied*' is notable.

"In all these cases, the result was what I have described; a *corps d'elite* of more or less value but of inferior numbers was purchased at the price of reducing the quality of the army as a whole.

"But the Germans were really compelled to adopt the scheme by force of circumstances. The quality of their recruits became so bad, both as to physique and morale, due to war exhaustion, that special assault units had to be designated and specially recruited and trained to act as the spearhead of their attacks. They first appeared in 1917, and by 1918 they were very much in evidence in almost every attack. There was usually a company assigned to lead each attacking regiment, though not permanently assigned thereto. Also the Germans designated certain of their best divisions as '*sturmtruppen*'; they got all the dirty work, poor devils. And they stood up damned well under it."

The colonel drained his glass, set it down, nodded agreement.

"If," he observed, "there was any criticism of Germans as soldiers, I'd say it lay in too much discipline; too much machine-like training, too little development of the initiative and resourcefulness of the individual. If a German unit lost its officers, the ononcoms couldn't take over, as ours do—at least not so well. They knew only the situations that were in the book; they couldn't think for themselves. Initiative had been drilled out of them."

"THE British had some of that too," the major remarked. "I think it came from officers being selected from a different social class at home from the enlisted man, just as in Germany. The class lines were not so rigid in British peacetime society as in the German, which is the measure of British superiority in that respect; the class lines were non-existent in Australia and Canada, which is the measure of the superiority of the Dominion troops to those from the United Kingdom in certain ways. Your Briton, and your Scot, too, makes a good solid soldier, dependable either for attack or defense; but the rank-and-file of British troops were rank-and-file at home too. They were never called upon to exercise leadership or initiative in peace-time, and it could hardly be expected of them in war.

"Moreover, the Territorial and 'New Army' battalions were all, in theory at least, part and parcel of old-line regiments, with all the glory of the regimental traditions to live up to and all the numbing rigidity of regimental iron-hard caste-prejudice to divide officers from men.

"The Australians and the Canadians had none of that. They had to make their armies out-of whole cloth, having nothing but a few militia units to begin with; and they did. The results can be testified to by the Germans—say by the Prussians, who came whooping through to what they thought was assured victory after the first gas attack at Ypres, on April 22d of '15. Came through, paused to let their reserves come up to exploit their victory, and were driven from their key position at Saint Julien

by a counter-attack put on by the 1st and 4th Canadian Battalions, driving forward over open ground, in broad daylight, utterly reckless of casualties.

"They died, most of them, those brave Canucks; but what were left held the positions they took under every sort of bombardment and under repeated counter-attack until they were relieved on the 25th. They died; but they saved the exposed left flank of the 1st Canadian Division and probably the whole British Army."

"Salute to Canada!" said the civilian, lifting his glass. "But this caste system you're talking of, this drilling of initiative out of soldiers—that ought to have been truer of the Russians, the old Imperial Army, I mean, than almost any of the others."

"It was," said the major. "The Russian non-com was all but useless as a leader of a small group. The Russian soldier was good, in mass; he would stand and defend himself till the last man had fallen; he had a certain stubbornness, a devotion to his Czar, which was the soul of the Russian Army. When he lost that devotion, the Russian Army went to pieces. There was nothing else to hold it together."

"Take the Siberian battalions which made the famous winter campaign in the Caucasus, winding up by the storming of Erzerum in February of '16. Climbing up the snow and ice covered slopes of the Deve-Boyun ridge, in the midst of a snowstorm, they drove home an assault with the bayonet and took the strongest of the Turkish forts, a position which had been deemed impregnable.

Russian

"*That* was while the Grand Duke Nicholas commanded them. But in '18, only two years later, when the Grand Duke had gone, when there was no more Czar, those same battalions simply dissolved and went home, leaving the Turks free not only to retake Erzerum, won with so much Russian blood, but to invade Russian territory and occupy Kars and Batum. Of course, later on, as the Soviet idea developed, as the Red Army was built up, the Russian soldier had a new ideal to hold his loyalty; as far as we can tell, the Red Army of today is a mighty formidable force. But it's a new army, with a new soul—okay—who's next?"

(to be continued)

"They shells these boats when they get us in the sea!"

I Meet a Submarine Commander

By Harry Wilson and Ernest Booth

IT ISN'T often you can win an argument with the master of a vessel ashore. At sea, of course, it's impossible. This particular argument was the ancient one: are captains who have gotten their tickets by coming up from sail to steam better qualified than the ones who rose from steam training only? Not that it matters greatly; the present argument between steam and Diesels has replaced it. But I did win an argument, once, with a skipper—although it required the help of a German sub commander.

The sea being the complex, beautiful, friendly, treacherous, black element it is, you just can't know too much about it. There's a challenge in its every mood. If you know the answers, you win; if you don't, you're as helpless as a drunken sailor trying to best a tropical bagnio madame.

This particular argument started while I was quarter-master on the *John H. Corday*, a five thousand ton freighter, loaded with foodstuffs out of Baltimore and headed down the bay. We were going to Bordeaux, if some sub didn't stop us. It was 1916, and the sea was lousy with subs. I had joined with a pierhead jump just two hours before she sailed. The chief officer had asked for my discharges, and naturally I didn't have 'em. A real sailor seldom has. The chief asked a few questions, seemed only partly satisfied with my answers, and told me:

"Take the wheel. If you're lying, I'll put you off with the pilot." He studied a moment, then (because I had already signed on) changed his threat: "No I won't. I'll disrate you to wiper, and you'll think you're in hell before the voyage is over."

Oil wiper in the engine room is the lowest job on a ship; usually only Mexicans or Filipinos were wipers, and the scurviest of them, at that.

I growled that I had put several years in sail, in addition to a score in steam. He growled a few more questions. We got along fine after that.

Captain Swensen hadn't any business on the bridge just then. The chief was an old sailing master who had come out of retirement and taken a mate's berth because real sailors were scarce and wages high. He was an excellent navigator. He was beside the pilot when I took the wheel. But the captain, before the ship left the dock, asked him:

"What's that you have there, Mister?"

"Old windjammer sailor, sir," the chief lauded me.

Swensen grunted. I was still slightly woozie from the two weeks' celebration ashore and his attitude angered me. I knew they needed a good wheelman, especially in the submarine zone. If a sub launched a torpedo and it was seen coming soon enough, an alert helmsman who executed orders instantly and correctly could send the ship out of its course. Many ships owed their survival to some helmsman who had dodged a launched torpedo. Knowing this, I grunted back at the skipper.

Swensen didn't like it: "Think you can run a ship, eh?"

"Through any damned sea in the world." I purposely omitted the "Sir."

The pilot took charge. We got out all right. But the argument was resumed between the skipper and the chief, who told me the skipper wanted to disrate me on account of my answer. But the chief persuaded him not to because of my ability as quartermaster. Said the chief to me: "I wish we had some real sailors aboard. . . ." He shook his head dubiously. "If we have to get into the small boats—"

WE got within two days of France when a French destroyer joined us. It was a frisky boat. Every whitecap was a sub; it went chasing 'em like a pup after ground squirrels. It zipped about us like a mad hornet. At night, lights out on both boats, we had courses set that presumed we wouldn't run into each other. The destroyer was more danger to us than a possible sub. Once, during the blackest part of the night, when the wind had whipped up the sea a bit, it went crazy and dashed across in front of our bows so close you could taste its smoke.

We unloaded in Bordeaux and started home in ballast. Two destroyers accompanied us fully five hundred miles out to sea. It was a clear, pleasant day. About two P. M. they left us.

I was on watch. What a relief to be safe on the Atlantic again! There were smiles on the faces of the crew. Swensen came onto the bridge, glared at me, then entered his cabin. He blamed me for some of the submarine stories that had scared his crew. There was a little lookout for submarines as we throbbed toward home at a nine knot speed. The crew joked about them—we had outwitted the Heinies!

I eased the ship along. I was relaxed. This had been a short voyage; the pay was excellent. We were all insured for this trip: $2,500 for our wives, sweethearts, or relatives if we were drowned or lost at sea; $150 for our clothes, if we lost the ship but got home ourselves. That $150 would do a lot of celebrating, I mused. If only a sub would—well, sort of muss us up, not too bad; and the French destroyer get our signals and pick us up—you know, without too long an interval. . . . Even in those days of high wages, a sailor man would have his dreams. . . .

Then I snapped out of it. There is bad luck in such thoughts. It would serve the captain right if he had to prove his part of the argument. You see, it was not the words that passed; they didn't carry so much weight; it was the unsaid things, the looks, the gestures that bespoke a hostile contempt. I swung the wheel over, easing the ship off, then brought her on again. If it had

been the night watch, I'd have rolled that tub until the skipper bounced around in his bunk. Him, and his snorting!

Again I shook off the mood. I thought of the hundred pointless worries we had endured coming over. Some of the tension we had endured seemed foolish, now it was over. The rusty cat who had appeared aboard the ship the first day came up to me. "Tom," the crew had dubbed him. He was a big friendly mouser who divided his time between officers and crew. He rubbed up against me. I bent over, stroked his fur, and winked at him:

"Troubles over, Tom," I said. He blinked, contented. He had been on other ships, I think, for he was perfectly at home.

The sunny afternoon was perfect.

About three hundred yards off our port bow a U-boat rose dripping to the surface.

I SANG out the alarm. A puff of smoke rose over her conning tower. A shot splashed into the water ahead of us. All the stories of German atrocities that I had ever heard pounded through my brain. The submarine took on the distorted lines of something out of a bad dream.

Our ship hove to immediately.

The sea was calm. In that silence which followed the stop, in the faces of the men, in the very quietness of the air, a bitter acrid mood passed over like a ghostly curse. Gone were my own thoughts of elation for the termination in port of a well paid voyage; gone were the envisioned delights of again walking on land. That U-boat, with open hatches, and with tiny figures on its decks, seemed to radiate terror.

A small boat was rowed over to us. It contained an officer and three men. The officer came directly to the bridge. For one perverse instant, as Captain Swensen and the chief officer faced about to meet him, I recalled our argument—and hated myself for doing so.

The German lieutenant came into my vision. He looked totally unlike my mental picture of a German naval officer. He had on a worn cap, a greasy leather coat, oil-stained breeches, and he needed a shave.

But he was a fine looking athletic fellow, and good nature flowed through his first words, spoken in perfect and fluent English.

"Hello, Captain Swensen!" His ready smile made me believe he was an old acquaintance of the skipper's.

The lieutenant laughed jovially. "Missed you coming over. I was on the lookout for you. We had advice from Baltimore that you had sailed with a cargo of foodstuffs for an enemy nation. Right?"

Captain Swensen nodded. He introduced the chief officer. I thought that in the handclasp of that pair there was that quick understanding of men who are seamen at heart. Swensen seemed to sense it.

"What do you intend doing?" I could have laughed over that one. There was only one answer possible. Swensen just didn't want to believe it.

"Sorry, Captain, but I'll have to sink you. Fortunes of war. I win, you lose." Then he smiled suddenly. "We only missed you coming over because a destroyer appeared about the time I was ready to launch a torpedo. We'd been out a long time, only one torpedo left; and I couldn't afford to miss with it, because my orders were to sink you. It's better this way."

"This way?" Swensen still didn't want to believe it.

The lieutenant glanced about the ship, seemed satisfied, and explained there was no immediate hurry. He'd give us twenty minutes to get off. He inquired if the boats were provisioned; informed that they were, he said he'd have bombs lowered into the holds.

The captain immediately got his ship's

papers, put them in a tin container, sealed them, and went to the deck. The German sailors were lowering the bombs into the ship's holds. Our own crew gathered up additional supplies and water and took their stations. Three blasts were blown on the whistle: "Abandon ship!" It was an unnecessary formality over which the Chief and I grinned as we stood by our own boat prepared to launch it. This was our element. The crew divided between our boat and that commanded by the captain and second officer. The third was with us.

I thought of the cat.

"Get that beast aboard," I called to a big Negro cook. He grabbed—Tom scampered down the deck. Other hands took after him. He had a lot of fun eluding them.

The lieutenant enjoyed the race. He stood watching it until a sailor caught him and brought him to our boat.

"All set? No other mascots?" The lieutenant laughed.

The watch from below had come up. Thanks to many boat drills on the way over, there was no confusion. There was a strained look on the faces of several of our men. The sailor's "mess-boy" was about sixty years old, and slightly more than half seas over from drinking lemon extract. He'd come aboard in Bordeaux verging on the delirium tremens. He jabbered: "They shells these boats when they get us in the sea."

The chief and his third cook, both Negroes, swallowed hard and stared from Mess to the smiling lieutenant.

Our small boats swung out; we lowered away, cast off and got the oars. The chief officer took command of our boat. I took a stroke oar myself when I saw how inexperienced the other men were. We pulled off four hundred yards or so. The submarine sailors had finished their work aboard the *Corday*. With the lieutenant they rowed back to the sub. Their tiny boat was taken aboard. It was all very friendly. The sun was warm, very pleasant. Some one shouted: "Better luck next trip!"

Just then I heard two dull explosions from the depths of our former floating home. For a minute nothing happened. Then the *John H. Corday* took a list to port; a few minutes later she started to settle by the head and list more to port.

No seaman ever sees a ship sink, under any conditions, without an almost indefinable regret. That ship meant nothing personally to any of us, so far as loss or gain was concerned. In fact, her sinking meant that we would—if the sub missed us with her gunfire and some of us survived—gain one hundred and fifty dollars extra for clothes.

I was not thinking of that as the list grew more pronounced. I was thinking of a stricken whale I had once seen when I was very young: that magnificent animal had listed, laid on one side. I almost hated the man who had driven the harpoon into her; and yet, at the instant of which I tell, I looked over at the sub and there was the lieutenant, his smile wide and friendly, his hand raised in a gesture of good fellowship.

SHE sank stern first. One moment a thousand tons of metal raised into the air, its bow pointed to the heavens. The next moment she had disappeared. In my mind's eye I could visualize the great wounds the bombs had torn in her side below the water-line.

We pulled closer to the U-boat. Captain Swensen megaphoned the commander: "Can you tow us in a way?"

The chief and I exchanged looks. It was apparent that the stories of shelling life boats were untrue.

The lieutenant scanned the sky and conferred with another officer. "Sorry, there's a destroyer somewhere near," he said. "They'll pick you up." He paused a moment, then added, "You're all husky men. The weather is fine. But watch out for a sudden blow. They come without warning on this Biscay Bay."

They waved to us. They closed their hatches and submerged. Less than an hour had elapsed since I was petting Tom's fur while standing on watch. Now the sea was bare of everything but two small boats.

We stepped the mast and set sail. The boat was a sturdy one, food and water supplies forward in a locker. About the boat were blankets, additional foodstuffs, and three kegs of water. There was an eight-knot breeze blowing and we bowled merrily along. The chief set a course for the coast of France. We were all in good spirits.

Olaf, who had caught Tom, was near the chief, who steered. I was opposite him. Forward of us was the third, and Cronin, a first assistant engineer. Then Collins and Tom Murphy and Sparks, the wireless operator, who was beside Tom Ponting, a wiper. Then the two cooks, and beyond them two oilers: Micky and Red. Further forward were two firemen; and then two seamen, Fred West and George Clark. In the bow was Mess, already slightly more than a little seasick.

The third knew nothing of sail. When the chief explained that he was now in command, and was making me chief under him, the third took it all right. Olaf volunteered the good news that he had handled sail. That gave us three experienced men in sail. The others just made themselves comfortable. We opened some of the foodstuff, ate, then settled down.

The chief and I stood watch and watch, six hours each; we agreed to put Collins or the other quartermaster on watch if necessary. Night fell. We hoisted a lantern to the mast head. Wrapped in two or three blankets apiece, everyone was warm. Sparks laughed, falsely, I thought. He said: "What a lot of fairy tales are told about the rigors of the sea."

The chief woke me at midnight. I took the rudder, and he gave me the course he was steering. The wind had freshened a good bit. We were doing a full five knots. The chief went to sleep. I looked over the boat, and everyone was sleeping. I looked about for the other boat, but didn't see its light. Forward, Mess was tossing about restlessly.

Tom came down toward me. He walked over the sleeping figures, pausing to inspect each man; about one or two he detoured. At the sailor, Olaf, he rubbed against the blanket. The wind whipped his fur up and he crouched down. His eyes, reflecting the masthead light, looked like fire. I reached over and drew him to me. He was company. The wind increased, but I held the course all right. I told Tom: "At this clip we'll soon get into where the destroyers are." I didn't tell him that I hoped the wind held up so we wouldn't have to row.

TOWARD morning the wind got stronger. The sea got choppy, but it was not bad. I eased the boat along as best I could, but several of the men were rolled about a little. They grumbled, burrowed further into their blankets.

Out in the east the sky softened. I was watching closely for any change of wind, for this bay can be a sailor's nightmare. The chief awoke. He roused several of the men. They had started to pass around some food, when it hit us.

One of those twisters, the kind that come from the northwest without warning, smacked the sail and laid us over on our side. The sea came in the way you dip water up with a bucket. We almost capsized, and the boat was flooded. Tins, blankets, and stores floated away. The wind howled with a force that you could scarce stand against. Racing across the sky came a mass of oily gray clouds.

"Let go that sail!" the chief shouted.

I put Collins at the rudder and leaped forward. He could steer all right; but only Olaf or the chief or I knew what to do to that sail. We let go the halyards. The sail came down with a run, then

bagged in the wind—and the boat listed again. The men were a dead weight on the wrong side; all tangled up with each other.

I slashed the sail free of the boom and the wind tore it away from the mast. The boat leveled again but was low in the water. The chief and I shoved buckets into the men's hands and got out the oars. We put four men to rowing, but they couldn't hold the boat's head up. Twice it fell off, shipping more water; the second time, just as we started up a high wave, the boat fell off almost into the trough.

I leaped to one oar; the chief pushed the helpless oiler away and grabbed another. By pulling our arms and guts out we got her head up again, but the wind had increased to a gale. Two men couldn't hold her for very long.

Sparks was praying—with a bucket in his hand. I was straining against that oar, and the chief was pulling so hard his neck looked like knotted cords. He was not a young man. My own hands were bleeding where the blisters had broken, and the meat was being rolled up in them. I kicked Sparks into the bottom of the boat, where Olaf grabbed his bucket and gave it to one of the cooks.

Men bailed with their hands, caps, and anything they could find. We were shipping no water over the side, but the spray was so heavy it fell into the boat like a waterfall. The waves increased in size. Painfully, by straining every muscle, we mounted one; then the nose went down, and with a speed that made the wood sing we raced into the valley and up the next wave. To hold her on by oars alone and not let her turn and capsize was almost impossible.

"Get on an oar!" The chief put four men, two on a side, at other oars. Together we fought our way back to the stern. The boat topped a wave. Tom appeared, soaked, scared. Opening the locker, the chief got out the sea anchor. I shoved Tom in. The boat was on another mad downward race and the spray stung like a charge of rock salt against my face.

The sea anchor, as usual, was not ready to go over. Crouched in the stern, working with hands that bled and with torn flesh that caught on the lines, the chief and I cursed in profane violence. On such a moment a seaman prays in profanity—the violence of our words made them a supplication.

We cursed the anchor, the men who had stowed it, and men now in the boat; with mighty imprecations we cursed the elements of sea and wind and sky. Again we were atop a mountain of water. Again we raced down with the speed of an express train.

For one brief instant, while we rose to the next mountain top, I glanced out to windward. The driven water glistened steel bright in that mad wind; overhead half the sky was greasy black. High in the air, it seemed to me that those other waves were smaller, drowned by the driven spray in that storm-torn desolation. My line of vision was over the stern, and for one instant I had a feeling of being removed from the scene, as though I stood apart and looked out over gigantic disturbances in which I had no part.

I can not know, now, whether I felt fear, or whether suddenly I was very humble. Whatever the name for it, I felt an almost painful assurance descend on me. It was like the hand of a too robust father descending on me in playful quieting of some youthful fear. For that instant, aloof between the hard pressure of the wind and the wild tumult of the wave, I knew such a peace as is given to few men to know.

Then the frightful descent into the trough.

Before I struggled with that sea anchor, I had scoffed at the men about me. Their fears and helplessness angered me. When it was ready to go over, even their clumsy efforts to assist appeared friendly gestures. I put my mouth close

to Sparks' ear and shouted: "We'll make it now."

The poor fellow nodded. Then the wind stung my face and the mood passed into the wild savagery of the storm.

With the sea anchor dragging we rode easier, but it was necessary to keep four oars out all the time. Olaf, while we were fighting to hold her head up, grinned and shouted: "By Gar! She blows a bit today."

THE wind increased toward evening. What had been gale force now became almost hurricane force. Spray was lifted in solid sheets and poured into the boat. The bottom was a litter of smashed gear, soggy stores, and blankets. Men worked in fours at the oars, one hour to a shift. One or two of them quit rowing; the boat sloughed about, went down into the trough sidewise, and we shipped another sea.

A leap and lunge at the oars by Olaf and the chief a heart-breaking pulling of the boat as she started to rise, then a superhuman effort to get her bow-on as the descend started.

In the blackness of the night only a sense of balance told the oarsmen when they had reached the zenith; and only the chief or Olaf or I seemed to have that sense. Sparks and Mess were together on one side of the boat; they dipped too deep and the oars went under the boat's side and were torn from their hands; again we yawed about. . . .

Throughout that night, it was row and row and row. Men fought with oars strange to them; their hands came away torn and raw. Men bailed until they fell into the bottom, and were pulled up to bail again. In turn we took our hour at the oars; in turn we bailed; in turn we fell exhausted and slept in water-soaked clothes.

On into the following day the wind howled; it would slack off to a gale force, then increase. The interior of the boat was always filled a foot deep with water. That second day faded away with an increase of wind. Fever flushed several faces. That second night the boat was harder to manage; several of the men just dropped over their oars and moaned. Again on that night the terrors of darkness were added to the viciousness of the sea. We had to drive one man to row; another whimpered and cried like a child.

The third day marked a definite insanity in Mess. He had broken into the locker forward and was munching sea biscuits, dipping them in the sea water. Chief ordered him aft. We both grabbed him. I held his jaws open by pressing my thumbs against his cheeks. Chief shoved a finger down the fellow's throat and induced vomiting. Cleansed of the salt water, he was put to rowing.

"I can't, I can't," he begged. His face was greenish.

"You have to!" Chief drove him to sweep an oar. Had he let the man actually become ill after purging him, there was no power on earth could have gotten him to his feet again. Shortly he relieved him of the oar, and gave him some fresh water to drink.

To hoist a sail again was impossible. The boat should have had the mast down, but to attempt it was to invite disaster. On into the night of the third day we rowed, and rose and fell over those mountains of water. There was no longer thought of regular rations, or shifts; the weakest of the men were dragged upright every six hours or so and made to work. The less weak held the oars as long as they could. My own hands had ceased to have feeling; my arms and back were one tremendous ache. Olaf had wrapped his hands: "It keeps the oar handles from the bones, where the meat isn't no more."

That night it seemed that all the howling furies of the universe descended. Possibly the human mind can stand only so much punishment before it retreats into insanity; I do know that the ele-

ments on that night appeared furiously engaged because we had survived the wildest attacks. Down into our boat poured a rain that was so solid you had to hold your hand over your nose and mouth to breathe. Bailing without a moment's stop, we managed to hold the boat afloat.

Then, despite Olaf and myself and the two Negro cooks, who were still fairly strong, the boat yawed, we shipped a sea and I felt the boat go dead under us. In that mad blackness, with all the demons of hell howling, with the men screaming, with strange frenzied hands grabbing at you, and with stores knocking against you, that boat came almost level with the sea.

To row was impossible. The oars floated to the handle. I stood bailing up against solid water as high as my waist. The boom came loose from its lashing aft and swung out. I sensed rather than saw it start. Defensively both my arms went about it and I was swung off into the sea. I wrapped both legs around it and started to work my way back. Against me the sea rushed, tore my legs from their lock, and almost broke my back with the force of the snap my body made as I hugged the boom and my legs were swept out toward the boom end.

I felt the boat start to climb, despite the water. In my mind's eye I saw it as swamped. I envisioned at least half the men overboard and swept away. Suddenly an oar crashed against my side!

The chief! That Olaf! Someone was rowing!

I inched along the boom, gained the mast. The boat was loggy, but as I slid into it someone handed me a bucket, and I bailed. One hand for the bucket and another to hold on with. I shouted to have that boom pulled in, and it was relayed aft. Then we were atop a wave, and the rocket-like down rush started.

Down—down into the blackest depths. The speed of the boat's rush increased the slap of the rain; on that down rush I almost strangled before I could get my breath. Whatever the limitations of human endurance, we did not reach them that particular night.

In the darkness we got the boat bailed, the boom lashed, the men at the oars. Chief and I alternated steering and pulling until morning. Olaf had been bashed on the head when the boom swung over. One of the oilers held his head out of the water so he wouldn't drown in the boat. I fell asleep just before dawn.

BY noon the wind died away. The seas still ran mountainous high. It was necessary to row in order that we make those climbs and descents. But again we could breathe. We took stock.

The men were feverish, exhausted; several had bad colds. We had lost considerable provisions. One case of forty-eight tins of corned beef had smashed up against the sextant, breaking it. We would not take any sights. The compass was all right. The chief ordered the extra sail out, and we bent it on and raised it. There was now not enough wind to make headway. Again the oars must be manned.

One man rebelled. The chief produced a revolver. "Get on that oar, or, by God, I'll lighten our cargo by the weight of your carcass." The man took the oar.

The chief called out: "Men, we have the worst of this behind us. One of the destroyers will pick us up within this day, or certainly tomorrow. You have come along fine, so far. Now, for the love of God, do your part." He held up his own torn hands. "I'll take my turn with you. Do as I tell you and we'll come through."

He eyed each man, then said calmly: "Are there any arms among you? Any weapons at all?"

No one answered: Mess, in the bow, laughed horribly: "I gotta can opener!"

The chief ignored him. "I'll have every man come aft, one at a time, and

submit to a search. Remember, this is for your own good!"

He gave me his revolver. Silently, thoroughly, he searched each man, and sent him back to his place. He told off the watches. Then Mess sang out: "Tom's howling to get out!"

From the locker, where I had tossed him, Tom was released. He was the sorriest looking member of the crew. Then rations were issued, water given out; and Tom came in for his portion and his drink of water.

The chief laid a course in the direction of the French coast. There was not enough wind to sail her. Because of our uncertainty of our position, we dared not tack about on what little adverse wind arose. We rowed—up and down those high seas. With the sun's heat, came increased fever; there was no medicine. We rowed.

From then until the evening of the sixteenth day we rowed. To have allowed the men to sit idle would have invited madness. As tempers increased and ugliness rose, the chief and I alternated six-hour watches at the rudder. When I slept he held that revolver; when he slept I held it.

If the oiler whose name I do not remember, but who carries a gash across his forehead when I drove him to row on that sixteenth day, will recall the incident, he may not so harshly resent that gash. I never had a chance to explain it. He had slept, awakened suddenly to take his turn, then shouted: "Be damned to this!" He had rushed to the side of the boat and was ready to dive when I belted him.

On that same evening, not two hours later, Mess leaped overboard before anyone could grab him. That night three different shifts had to be driven to work.

The seventeenth day was concentrated madness. Water was almost gone. We had lost many stores during the storm. The chief called for a case of corned beef that remained. It was handed aft to him. He tossed it overboard. "Worse stuff!" Some of the men protested. I recognized the merit of his action. That stuff would quickly increase thirsts. On water alone we could go much further.

A fair breeze rose. The sail felt its weight. We were off for the coast of France under sail for the first time since the storm! The men could relax. Everyone now had a fever and cold. Olaf's head was infected; he was delirious. We had dried our clothes somewhat; in doing so several of the men had got sun and wind burns on naked bodies. Their fever rose. All that night we made fair headway. Our water was gone.

Next morning, Olaf had one lucid interval. "She sails, by Gar! We make fine argument with Captain Swensen, now!"

Smoke low on the horizon. A plume of smoke passing parallel to us. Sparks prayed aloud, from his heart. A couple of the men snickered feverishly. We were all light-headed. The chief was hollow-eyed. I suggested setting the sail afire. *Anything* to attract their attention.

The chief croaked: "Cut the sail from the boom, let it flap. We may need it again."

Need it again? To go further? Merciful God! We have fought this sea, met its challenge, come through with our lives and sanity. A hull came into view. Would they see us? *Make* them see us!

The sail flapped out like a big flag. From the speed of the ship we knew her to be a destroyer. There was a half hour of torment; we alternatively lived and died each minute. Every man was up; even in their weakness they waved something—one fellow a shoe.

THE FRENCH destroyer changed course, came bearing down directly on us. She hove to. Chief and I grabbed oars, others helped; somehow we got alongside her. French sailors dropped into our boat on the tackles they let down and hooked our boat to them. She hoisted us, boat and all, right up on deck.

The chief reported, then collapsed. I staggered down to the hospital, got a quart of warm wine into me, and fell into bed.

We were within sixty miles of the French coast. The chief drew well-earned congratulations on his piloting. The French said they knew we had been torpedoed; the German had claimed his victory and Berlin had released it for confirmation. The French had been looking for us—far out.

They wanted to get that submarine badly! In that bed, with that wine coursing through me, with the feel of clean sheets beneath me, with the memory of that single instant atop the wave when I had been given a strange assurance, I hoped mightily that they did *not* get that sub commander. To think of that smiling, good-natured fellow trapped in a submarine and strangling to death just didn't fit into the "fortunes of war," even as I now understood them.

Tom came ashore with me at Bassens. The French gave me an exemption card that explained I was *bon ami la patrie,* or something that made the gendarmes take me to a hotel instead of the bastile when my spiritual exaltation grew too noisy. A woman who had a canteen tied a ribbon on Tom; he promptly chewed it off, and we both had a gloriously intoxicated time of it. Two weeks later, in that same canteen, a cook from the steamer *War Baron* got stabbed in a fight. I got his job on that ship and, still carrying Tom, returned to the United States.

Captain Swensen's boat and crew were never heard from. It seems to me, now, that that was a hell of a way to win an argument. Incidentally, Tom stayed on the *War Baron;* a regular sea cat—that's probably why he was such a rusty looking mouser.

Adventure 15c

THE TRAIL AHEAD

Brings you a sea-going novelette of ships and men, and the salmon fleet out of Puget Sound—

"Pigs Without Bristles," by Bertrand W. Sinclair—

And

Another "forgotten men" story by H. Bedford-Jones, "West Point Gray," about the battle of Lundy's Lane; "An Hour in She-Devil's Bay," a Richard Howells Watkins story about the schooner *Starlight* in the West Indies; "Young Hardesty Circulates," by Henry Herbert Knibbs; the concluding installment of "The Soul of the Soldier," by R. Ernest Dupuy and George Fielding Eliot; the third part of Georges Surdez' "Nine Picked Men," and other fiction and fact stories.

The July issue is on sale June 10th

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

MANY of the comrades will remember the story of the Bowie knife that Meigs O. Frost told us a year or so ago. Many others will recall the days further back when Frost was one of our regular yarn-spinners.

He has a story in this issue, another one has just come in from him about the old duelling days of New Orleans, and he declares his intention of coming back with us for good.

I've asked him to reintroduce himself and tell us what he's been up to in a long absence.

The old *Camp-Fire* is a pleasant place to which to return. When I first sat down with the gang of the Writers' Brigade of *Adventure,* Arthur Sullivant Hoffman was Officer Commanding. I think the year was about 1919 or 1920, and the story "With White Kid Gloves." Lots of water under lots of bridges since then.

Me? One more New England Yankee who rambled, after nearly 300 years of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut. The ancestors started fighting Indians in what's now York County, Maine, in 1634. I fought text-books at Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, and Haverford College, Haverford, Pennsylvania; and then started as a cub reporter, New York Times, and got interested in what was happening west of the Hudson River. The first jump was to Texas. Galveston News. Dallas News. New Orleans Item. New Orleans States. New Orleans Times-Picayune. Always as a reporter, the only job I ever really wanted on this earth.

Assignments: Seven Latin-American revolutions. Interviewed every president of Mexico from Porfirio Diaz to Ortiz Rubio. Interviewed various presidents, every republic in Central America, in their respective capitals. About every kind of a story a reporter writes, in 43 of the 48 states, in Canada, Alaska, Hawaiian Islands, Cuba. Logged slightly better than 60,000 miles as "mezzanine pilot", passenger flying on stories, including three double trans-continentals. Covered too many funerals of too many flying friends, who had flown me places, including Jimmy Wedell when he was land-plane speed champion. I'm told I'm the only reporter who ever made two crash dives in U. S. Navy submarines (R-4 at Pearl Harbor, Honolulu; V-4 at San Diego, Cal.) but I doubt it. Covered murders, trials, politics, police, riots, Mississippi River floods (1927 was a lulu!) etc., etc. Interviewed every president of the United States in the White House from Theodore Roosevelt through Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Second lieutenant, 1st Louisiana Field Artillery (Washington Artillery), Mexican Border Service, 1916. Special Agent, United States Shipping Board, World War, for supposed special qualifications running down German gentlemen monkeying with Gulf Coast ship-building yards.

Heart-break of life: Named by President Hoover as civilian to go with midshipmen's cruise on *U. S. S. Arkansas and U. S. S. Wyoming* to Europe, contracted amoebic dysentery in Guatemala on assignment just

as I was about to sail for New Orleans and fly to Annapolis, and was in hospital when *Arkansas* and *Wyoming* sailed. That was the trip the *Wyoming* rescued Sir Hubert Wilkins' polar submarine, the *Nautilus*, in distress in mid-Atlantic, and I would have been the only newspaper reporter on the scene! With a navy radio ready to take all the copy a guy could write!

Asi la vida en las tropicas!

Salud y pesetas, compañeros. It's swell to be with you again.

A "NATURAL," as he calls it, comes to us from C. H. Calhoun of Balboa Heights, Canal Zone. It is an exact copy of a log book entry in the files of the Shipping Commissioner in the Zone. Comrade Calhoun calls it, "The Passing of Mike Cummings."

"U. S. Statutes, Sec. 4290. Every vessel making voyages from a port in the United States to any foreign port (except ports in the British North American possessions), or, being of the burden of seventy-five tons or upward, from a port on the Atlantic to a port on the Pacific, or *vise versa*, shall have an official log-book; and every master of such vessel shall make, or cause to be made therein, entry of the following matters, that is to say:

"Every case of illness or injury happening to any member of the crew, with the nature thereof, and the medical treatment.

"Every case of death happening on board, with the cause thereof."

Extract from the official log-book of the *S. S. Absaroka*, bound from Mobile to Pernambuco, via Maracaibo, Venezuela.

"On August 24th Mike Cummings, coal-passer, complained that he was sick and he was not working on the 23rd. We are in the Tropics and the heat is heavy and wind light. I examined him and found his pulse beating 98, temperature 102, breathing 52. Then I discovered that off watch he has been sleeping with an electric fan turned on him which caused pleurisy or pneumonia.

"On the night of the 24th his temperature 99.8, pulse 90, breathing short.

"On the 25th, temperature 98.7, pulse 110, short breathing.

"On the 26th, temperature normal, pulse 110, very weak.

"On the 27th, feeling better.

"Medicine used: On the 24th, when I discovered fever, I gave him five grains of quinine, then I discovered his heart commence to beat fast, and I used aspirin to check the fever and I also used lots of vapor rub and oil of eucaliptis and hot water bags.

"On the 26th, he ate six boiled eggs and one cup of beef tea.

"On the 27th, he ate three soft boiled eggs and two cups of beef tea. At five P. M. on the 27th, temperature normal, pulse beating 108 and it looks like he is improving.

"A constant watch at night was kept.

"In latitude 10-58 North, Longitude 79-29 West, at four A. M. August 28th, Mike Cummings passed away.

"It appears like the man's heart failed.

Signed:
Nils Spar
Master

Witnessed:
Asger Nilsen
First Officer."

THE story of the mambas brings us an interesting recollection from George Battman of Woodbridge, New Jersey, of his own experience with two green mambas. And a sure-enough curious and startling way the bushmen have of getting venison.

Gordon MacCreagh tells me that scientists doubt music has any effect on snakes, and probably there's no relationship between a snake-charmer's tunes and his apparent hypnotic power over the serpents. In the mamba story the two mambas were apparently under the spell of the woman's fiddle, but maybe it was the movement of the fiddle bow that fascinated them. The snake-charmers of India play flutes to their cobras, but they keep the flute swaying and the cobras sway their heads with it; and though the snakes seem to be following the sounds from the mouth of flute, they are "hypnotized" by the pendulum swinging of their own heads in following the motion.

Hugh Prior's "Trapped by Black Mambas", in your February issue leaves a question that can never be fully answered: That is: If Mrs. Cruikshank had stopped playing the fiddle, would the snakes have bitten her?

This question comes to me particularly on

account of an experience with a couple of mambas of another color, way back in 1905. Arriving fresh from London at a place called Magee's Myn in the North Transvaal, totally ignorant of the ways of the wild, I had occasion to enter a small corrugated outhouse, a few feet square. (Chic Sales could have described it better).

Closing the door, I noticed a couple of green snakes' heads hanging over the lintel, their bodies resting in opposite directions along the top frame, and their tongues flicking busily. I admired their beautiful streamlines and green shading, while they seemed to be sizing me up. Having read somewhere that most wild things will not attack humans unless molested, I wondered mildly whether or not they were poisonous. The lizards chasing flies around the walls explained their mission. In a few minutes I went out, my head again passing a few inches beneath them, and closed the door.

On returning to the house I casually mentioned the snakes, and the reaction was as though I had shouted fire at a movie. The fellows rushed for long canes, and saturated some old bags with kerosene. Opening the door of the shed with a pole, they thrust the burning rags in and closed the door.

Nothing happened for awhile, and we were just going to push the shed over, when in opposite directions, swift and straight as arrows, or maybe swifter, came the two snakes. The long canes went into action, and two fine zoo specimens were ruined.

For the rest of that evening I listened to snake stories from the repertoire of the bushman houseboy, and learned that green mambas hang from the branches of trees and will strike any living thing that passes below.

The boy also told us that the boa was a very good snake, it supplied fresh meat for the bushmen. He said that when a boa had swallowed a buck, leaving the antlers protruding from its jaws, it would go to sleep; then the bushmen would tie a rope to the horns of the buck, haul it from the interior of the snake, and transfer it to their own interiors.

AS ANNOUNCED last month, Tracy Richardson, soldier of fortune, tells us about the "American Legion" of the Canadian army, in which he served a short time as captain, and its so-called "mutiny" which from this distance looks both humorous and thrilling, and worked out in a good sporting way. Tracy Richardson started his career in Central America with Lee Christmas and Sam Dreben, and as he says, "I have fought under ten flags in ten different wars, and I don't have a single medal to show for it. I think that's some kind of a record."

COLD record of the 97th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, would probably be dull reading. It would show that the first member was signed on October 30, 1915, that his name was Duke Harding and that he was killed in France, in action. But to complete Duke Harding's record they would have

to add that he was a member at the time of his death of the Royal Canadian Regiment, and that would lead to the information that the 97th Bn. was broken up in 1916 and its members sent as replacements to other line regiments. Disbanded and forgotten as far as the records go.

Not many people would be able to tell you about the 97th Bn., but if the name "American Legion" were mentioned—well, there was no one in all Canada that could not tell you stories about that wild bunch of hellcats. And there would be no dull reading in the history of the American Legion, the toughest, hardest bunch of two fisted fighting men ever gathered together anywhere. The best soldiers and the best friends I ever met.

The idea of the American Legion originated in the American Club of Toronto. Asa Minard, president of the club, was made Captain Paymaster. The Rev. C. S. Bullock was chaplain and in charge of recruiting. Col. A. B. Clark was the first commanding officer but only for a short while. Handling that outfit was no gentleman's job. Wade L. Jolly succeeded in command, a former captain of Marines. Bob Adams, and a better soldier never fought, was second in command. He had years of service in the American Regular

army. Maj. Walter Guthrie, from the Philippine Constabulary, Capt. Speed Manning, also of the scouts, "Chinese" White, high ranking officer in the Chinese army, Mason, Lieb. Donald Mcrae came from West Point. Rassmussen who commanded A Company came up from Mexico. And so it went. Most of the officers were just as hard boiled as the men. Among the enlisted men almost every army and navy in the world had done its part to train them. That was their great trouble. They knew they were all ready to fight and did not want to take all year to train.

When the Legion soldiered it soldiered, but when it played—well, I've heard that mothers in Toronto used the name "American Legion" to scare their children. Anyway, about seventy-five percent of them stayed in France after the war, buried as Canadians, not as Americans.

One Victoria Cross went to a member of the American Legion, to Captain B. S. Hutchinson, medical officer of the Legion, but later attached to the Seventy-fifth Battalion.

Politics killed the American Legion. The United States was neutral then, and Germany protested to Washington against an American Legion in the field. They trained in Toronto, went to Quebec to sail, but something happened to the transport so they shifted them to Kentville, Nova Scotia, to Camp Aldershot, to wait for another boat. There they waited, worked and sweated while the powers bickered. Men became disgusted and deserted, the 211th, 212th and 213th Battalions were brought from the west where they were being recruited and used to fill the ranks of the 97th. Then all badges were taken up and a new one issued. The original badge was the Canadian Maple leaf with the coat of arms of George Washington superimposed. It was from this coat of arms that the design for the American Flag came. Across the bottom were the words, American Legion. The new badge was the same except that the wording was changed to the latin words, Acta Non Verba (deeds not words).

Dropping the name American Legion was a blow to the outfit. They began to doubt they would ever get overseas. Many of them deserted and joined up with more fortunate battalions, others just went back to the States, fed up.

I had better luck with my men than most of them. That machine gun crew were just the toughest bunch in the American Legion, also by far the most versatile. One of them is now an internationally known writer, another a nationally known poet, one is president of a big mining company, another has a ranch in Arizona, and one of them is art director for British Gaumont Pictures, in London. The most of them are buried in France.

I kept them busy. We drilled hard, and played hard. They built a tennis court and that's where they settled most of their fights. We went on long hikes through the Land of Evangeline. We fished, hunted and picked wild strawberries and blue berries. Their mess was far better than the officers' mess, so Captain Hutchinson, Lieutenant Hines, signal officer, and I took our meals with the men. But the thing that held them together more than anything was their flag.

Homer Shea came to my tent one day with a strange request. "Captain, would you let us use that small flag that hangs over your cot?"

My answer was short, "No, but what do you want with a flag?"

"We're going to put up a flag pole and fly the American flag, and we wanted to use yours."

"No, Shea," I explained, "I've carried that flag a long time, in Nicaragua, Honduras, Mexico, wherever I've gone. It was the first American flag ever displayed in the trenches in France. But I'll give you another flag."

They erected the flag pole in front of my tent, a tall slender tree, fifty feet to its tip. To its top they hoisted a silk flag, given to me by a passing American tourist.

It was raised regularly in the morning and religously lowered at sundown. One evening James Kenedy, the kid of the outfit—killed in France—appeared with a tin whistle, and Irish Murphy with a harmonica, and played the Star Spangled Banner as the flag was lowered. Two days later Homer Shea appeared with a small toy cannon, the sunset gun.

It was not long before the regimental band was turning out every evening. The bugler would sound colors, the sunset gun would roar out its salute, the flag would be lowered to the music of the American national anthem, while the Legion stood at attention. Like a down hill snowball the idea grew until it was part and parcel of the American Legion.

Then I was notified that official notice had been taken of the flag, that the custom would have to be discontinued.

"Tracy," said Colonel Jolly, "Colonel Taylor, the camp commander, says that the use of the American flag by a Canadian Regiment will not be tolerated. Now, they are your men, your outfit, what are you going to do about it?"

"Well, colonel," I replied. "I'm going to do just the same thing you have done, pass

the buck. I'll tell the men, and unless I'm mistaken, they'll tell Colonel Taylor."

I told the men, with my tongue in my cheek, I must admit. They had heard the rumor and were prepared. The next morning I looked twice at the flag pole. At first I thought the men had decided to discontinue the use of the flag, then I saw it floating, a tiny flag, eight inches long, but the American Flag.

Every morning they continued to raise that tiny flag to the top of the pole, at sunset it was lowered to the roar of the cannon and the strains of the American anthem. And the entire American Legion turned out and stood to salute that tiny flag. Somebody had made the mistake of telling them they couldn't.

Then came the day when the Camp Commander, Colonel Taylor, and two of his red tabbed staff came to the headquarters of the 97th Bn. and issued a peremptory order to Colonel Jolly;

"This nonsense must stop, we will have no flag flying over a Canadian unit but the British flag."

Colonel Jolly was helpless. He could order, but he knew his orders would be ignored, quietly, politely, but ignored. So he played the army game again, he passed the buck, he sent for me.

"You sent for me, sir?" I inquired as I saluted.

"Yes, captain. Colonel Taylor has ordered that the flying of the American flag be discontinued. Have you any suggestions as to how it can be done?"

"None, sir. But perhaps Colonel does not understand what the flag means to the Legion."

"Understand!" thundered Colonel Taylor, "I understand that the American flag is flying over a Canadian Regiment, in a Canadian camp, that it is saluted and the National Anthem of the United States is played. I understand it is your outfit, Richardson, that is responsible for this flag, that they raised the flag pole, they raise and lower the flag, and care for it. It is mutiny. I order it stopped."

"There's one thing you do not understand sir." I told him, very respectfully, "When the American flag ceases to fly from that flag pole, the 97th Battalion will cease to exist. It will scatter to the four winds and Canada will lose the services of as fine a body of soldiers as ever volunteered to fight for King and Country."

"Nonsense!" snapped the Colonel.

"No. sir," I protested. "This flag raising may have started as a prank, but it has grown into symbol, it is the regiment. Might I suggest that you wait ten minutes, sir, and judge for yourself."

"All stuff and nonsense. I'm sick of so much fuss over such a little flag. I'll wait, then I'll give the order myself."

Like wildfire word passed through the camp that the Post Commander was there to stop the use of the American flag. Murmurs like angry waves could be heard in the tents. Sergeant Clint Imerson went to a position where I could see him and wigwagged the cryptic words, "Don't surrender."

Strong and clear on the evening air came the call to colors. The shuffle of feet was heard as the men quit their tents to line up. Kid Kennedy fired the sunset gun and to the tune of the Star Spangled Banner Sergeant Gilson lowered the tiny flag, while the color guard presented arms and every man in that camp had his hand raised in salute.

In front of Colonel Jolly's tent the tension was terrific. Colonel Jolly, Major Adams and I all snapped to salute as we faced the flag. For a moment Colonel Taylor and his aides stood in startled wonderment and dismay at this most flagrant breech of his orders. Then like the good soldier he really was, he sprang to his feet, followed by his aides, and stood rigidly at salute.

The flag lowered, the music finished, the men remained standing, edging closer to our group, waiting for the verdict: to be or not to be? In our group there was a solemn silence, with every eye focused on Colonel Taylor. For a full minute he stood there silent, and if any emotion was portrayed in his face it was wonderment. Then swiftly he turned to Colonel Jolly.

"By gad, sir! That was the grandest thing I ever saw. Colonel, all the King's rules and regulations to the contrary, they can fly their American flag from its pole as long as I have anything to do with this camp. I certainly did not understand. I'm proud to have saluted their flag."

I knew the tension of the men, also their nature. I shot my right hand into the air, straight up. For a moment there was a silence, then as one the whole camp burst into three long hearty cheers, and the band broke into the tune of "Oh Canada," and the words of the song were taken up by a thousand voices. Americans, serving in the cause of Canada, the Legion. . . .

On September 16, 1916, the men of the American Legion swarmed up the gangplank of the S.S. Olympic, bound for the war, from which so many of them did not return. I stood on the dock and waved them goodbye,

and I was not ashamed of the tears that streamed down my face at the farewell.

I had the news, as yet a secret, that the American Legion was not to be allowed to go to the front as a unit. They would be used as replacements to line regiments. I had transferred to the air service.

Months later I flew over the front where a terrific struggle was going on. The Canadians were taking Vimy Ridge. I knew that somewhere below me in the muck of rain and snow, blood and filth, the Seventh Canadian Infantry Brigade were battling. The R.C.R.'s Canada's only regular regiment, the P.P.C. L.I., my old outfit, the 49th Battalion and the 43rd Black Watch. If the American Legion could not go over as a unit they could not have been assigned to better outfits, and it is a matter of record that as soldiers these premier regiments were glad to get the men of the American Legion. They may have been tough, but they never made better soldiers.

THE fact story "I Meet a Submarine Commander" needs some explanation. It is betraying no confidence to say that the author, Ernest Booth, is in San Quentin. He used to write stories about his prison life.

A few years ago we read that the warden of San Quentin had forbidden any writing of fiction or articles by inmates. Our editorial reaction was that this was too bad, because it would stop Ernest Booth. Editors frequently see manuscripts from prisoners, but it's rare that one of them has the real knack of writing. The warden's rule, apparently, applies only to stories of crime and seems a fair one.

I've forgotten the details, but Booth went to prison on complaint of a bank. It wasn't a sneakery like forging a check or falsifying books—the complaint was that he came in during banking hours with some other fellows and some guns. Fortunately no one was killed and the getaway car didn't get away.

Naturally we wanted to know how a man in San Quentin arranged a collaboration. Well, Harry Wilson is in there too. He's been there nine years, not so long as Booth, and I don't know what he did.

And how about printing their story as a fact story?

The only thing I have to go on is what Father Cashin told me ten years ago. Father Cashin was chaplain at Sing Sing for twenty years, and after he came to a New York City parish it occurred to me that he had a great story to tell—certainly he'd know the lives and thoughts of prisoners, and the great causes of crime. I wanted to get the story.

Of course I didn't get it. Being a Protestant, there were things I did not understand and appreciate, or I should have known better than ask for that story. But I'm glad I went to see Father Cashin.

He was a big quiet man with fine grey eyes and a rugged face—any man would like the cut of him, for chaplain of his regiment, or the commanding officer, or any other job calling for courage and honest intelligence. He told me that what he knew he knew as a priest, and therefore he knew it in confidence and not for publication.

But seeing my disappointment, he smiled and gave me some more time. And he told me this story:

The boys—he called them the boys—at Sing Sing got together once and gave him a gold watch. He wore it in his watch pocket with a fob. One of the prisoners stopped him one day and said:

"Father, ain't you taking chances wearing the watch around here that way? Why don't you put a chain on it? Somebody might lift it."

"John," said Father Cashin, "you don't really believe any of the boys would do that, do you?"

"Father, I dunno about that," said John. "*Some* of the men in here ain't honest."

Thinking it over, we'll run that fact story by those two San Quentin "boys" as a fact story. H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

A BACK-TO-NATURE vacation worth considering.

Request:—I have read of trips being made in small boats through the Trent Canal system from Georgian Bay to Lake Ontario, and also from Georgian Bay through the French River, Lake Nipissing, and connecting waters to the Ottawa River.

I would like to get together all the available information during the early Spring in order that, if these trips are possible. I may make one this coming Summer.

C. E. O'Connor, Detroit, Mich.

Reply by A. D. L. Robinson:—A small boat, entering the Trent Canal from Port Severn at the foot of Sturgeon Bay, can come down from there on the canal—which is really the Severn River in places—to Lake Couchiching at the Village of Washago, thence ten miles to Orillia, through the Narrows which connects Couchiching to Lake Simcoe, and as far as Holland Landing. But, although the Holland River will take you a few miles south to Lake Ontario, at its end the canal ceases, never having been completed. Motoring past there several times a year from here to Orillia, I notice that the canal is obsolete. And never again will it be used for political purposes as in the past! So that means either train or motor from there to Lake Ontario.

From Georgian Bay, on the other proposed route, you enter French River and thence many miles to Lake Nipissing. From there by the Mattawa River to the Ottawa River, down that river some ninety miles to McGregor Bay. I know this bay well, having lived in Pembroke, seven miles south of the bay, for ten years. Some forty miles above Pembroke you encounter the Des Joachim Rapids, a turbulent elbow of the Ottawa, which would have to be portaged for some three miles—or perhaps more. From there on no rapids whatever, only the incomparably lovely scenery of the Ottawa, than which there is nothing finer in Canada.

It would be a wonderful trip from the French River, but it would, I fancy, occupy many weeks—unless the boat were run by a small engine. I wish you all possible good luck. If there are any other details which you

would care to have, I should be glad to provide them—if I can.

THE little "chigger" is no friend to man.

Request:—We are planning an expedition into the jungles of Northern Brazil and British Guiana, and would like to know what kinds of poisonous spiders and other insects we will meet up with there. Could you also tell us what precautions we should take?

Carson Hinaman, Port Jervis, N. Y.

Reply by Dr. S. W. Frost:—My experience in the "bush" of Central and South America has taught me that the smallest animals are the ones to be feared. I refer to the tick and the red-bug, or chigger. In uncultivated areas which have not been burned over, the latter is especially troublesome. The red-bug is almost microscopic, enters the hair follicles and there dies and festers. People with delicate skins suffer severe pain and in bad cases, run a fever. Personally I fear these more than snakes or other poisonous animals. One never knows that they have a dose of red-bugs until about two or three days after returning from the jungle. Then it is too late to do anything but take it. There is nothing to be done to prevent red-bug infestation. There are hundreds of remedies suggested by different people who live here but they only work because the individuals are not susceptible. Fumes of sulphur dusted into the clothing will give some relief. The great fear is the danger of infection when the bites are scratched and believe me they itch like hell.

Ticks are also abundant in the jungle. They cause considerable itching and may lead to serious infections. Fortunately they are large enough to be seen and can be removed before trouble starts. Adhesive tape is good for this purpose as they will stick to the adhesive tape. If they become securely fastened, use a little chloroform on cotton and they will soon release their grip.

There are few or no spiders to be feared. The tarantula inflicts serious pain but is not fatal to adults. It is large and can usually be avoided. I have just completed two months in the tropics and have only seen two tarantulas. I could find a dozen any night if I wanted to go out and search for them. They live usually in the grass in holes in the ground and prefer to come out at night.

The scorpion is exceedingly virulent and may cause death. The South American Centipede often measures a foot long and its sting is very painful It is rare however to run across these unless you are collecting plants or animals and are searching for such things. I have found only two scorpions and I spent several hours searching for these.

Good luck and watch those little devils.

THE crossbow *versus* the longbow.

Request:—I am curious about the crossbow that was used in the Medieval days.

I would like to know, first, how it compares with the longbow of today in shooting distance, accuracy, and penetrating power; second, if I can get good plans or blue prints to make one; third, are there any archery clubs around Chicago that use the crossbow; and fourth, how could it possibly compare as a hunting weapon (if skillfully used) with other sporting weapons.

George R. Hart, Chicago, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Earl B. Powell:—The crossbow used to have about the same range as the longbow, and was a little more accurate, but there was no comparison for rapidity of fire, thus making the longbow a superior military weapon. For still hunting, the crossbow with its greater accuracy was much preferred.

I think there is a copy of "The Book of the Crossbow" by Ralph Paine Galwey, in one of your libraries in Chicago, and it is the best thing I know of. It will give you all the dope wanted.

I do not know of any clubs in Chicago that use the crossbow but the Swiss here in Los Angeles shoot sometimes, and it is very possible that there is some sort of Swiss organization there that practices. It is the Swiss national sport.

As to hunting use, and the advantages, you can make one that will kill any game on earth. It is noiseless and while not as accurate as a rifle, of course, it is splendid for closely settled regions. For hunting rabbits in the snow it is unequaled. I have killed much game with a crossbow.

I think that L. E. Stemmler Co. makes them. Address Queens Village, L. I., New York.

I know that A. F. Stoeger, Inc., 507 Fifth Ave., New York City, imports them from Germany for sale here.

IF YOU would learn Swahili, better not be a purist.

Request:—Is there a good Swahili grammar and dictionary published in English, and if so, where can it be obtained? If published

in England, is there an agency in the United States which handles it?

Owen S. J. Albert, Paris, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Gordon MacCreagh:—There are two main types of grammars. (1) the solid, pedagogic tome, starting with substantives and going on to verbs and then adjectives, and so to ponderous construction of sentences. (2) The learn-as-you-run type, starting with simple sentences and building up on them, giving such grammatical definition as may be necessary as you go along.

The first type will give you a better grounding in Swahili. The number two will probably give you a certain store of working sentences quicker.

For most European languages I, personally, have found the second type preferable. For Swahili, I wonder. A good grounding is quite important for Swahili—*if* your intention is to learn to speak a decently accurate Swahili.

On the other hand, there exists a curious language, evolved and spoken by countless thousands of British settlers in East Africa, and fondly called by them, Swahili. This language requires only a reasonable vocabulary; it employs only the uninflected nominative singular of substantives and adjectives and the infinitives of verbs; and it is spoken with the universal British accent.

Its function is that it is the standard white man's Swahili; the vast majority of white men never learn any other; and it is understood by servants—who have learned to understand it and thus raise themselves out of the submerged ranks of porters and *askaris* to the elevated position of domestics.

If you propose to go to East Africa and need just enough Swahili to give orders to servants, the white man language could be acquired out of either type of book, and would not be difficult, since its only requirement is a vocabulary.

If, on the other hand, you might be interested in Swahili as a language—and a highly interesting language it is too—I think I would recommend both types. Let me say, two separate books, the titles of which I append.

If I appear to make much out of something of little import, let me explain by brief example.

In Swahili, one is *moja,* two is *mbili.* Man is *M'tu.* A man is *M'tu m'moja.* Two men becomes *watu wapili.*

But suppose the noun begins with ki instead of Mi. Thing is *kitu.* A thing is *kitu kimoja.* Two things become *vitu vipili.* A good thing, *kitu kimoja kizuri.*

And so on, to eight different classes of nouns having different first syllables. Pronouns, adjectives are similarly inflected. And when you get into verbs you decide to be content with white man Swahili.

So then, books. Type 1. There is "A Handbook of the Swahili Language" by Edward Steere, L. L. D. published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. London. Price: 4 shillings.

Type 2. "A First Swahili Book" by Drs. A. & M. Werner. Published by the Sheldon Press, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London.

Now, there may be something better than these—I don't consider either of them to be nearly as good as the well-known "Rosenthal Method" for self study of languages, (unfortunately restricted to European languages).

I suggest that you write to The Commissioner, His Majesty's East African Dependencies, Royal Mail Building, Cockspur Street, London S. W. 1.

This office exists for the purpose of giving information and luring settlers to West Africa. It will go to all kinds of trouble to furnish information. It will surely advise you as to instruction books—and it may even send you something for nothing.

THE Inca treasure and other stories.

Request:—Can you send me information on the lost treasure of the Incas, otherwise known as the Treasure of Valverde? Can you tell me where I can get a duplicate copy of the old treasure chart?

Barry Gilhart, Peoria, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Edgar Young:—All the details of the Incas treasure would possibly fill a number of fat volumes but the general facts about it follow.

The Incas, an inbred race with large ears, numbering but a few thousand, were the rulers of some two million Quechua and Aymara Indians in the uplands of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. There had been some seventy Inca rulers when Pizarro arrived with his *Conquistadores.* The tradition is that Manco Capac and Colla Ocla Huaca, brother and sister, man and wife, arrived on a boat or reed raft, possibly from Persia (Irania), and started civilizing the Indians whom they found living in dugouts and holes in the cliffs little better off than beasts. (This account is taken from the book written by Garcilasso de la Vega, the son of an Inca princess, who went to Spain after the Con-

quest and who set down in great detail the habits and customs of the Incas and their subjects.) At any rate these Incas introduced Sun worship and were a kingly and sacerdotal caste ruling the realm. The government was communistic and there was no poverty and very little crime. Gold was not used as a money but was gathered as something sacred to the Sun and turned over to the Incas who used it for sewers, house-tiles, paneling, pots and pans, and to make huge representations of the Sun and such common animals as the llama, alpaca, and various fowls and reptiles which they placed about their yards as ornaments.

The main capital of the Incas and their holy city was at Cuzco, Peru, but some time before the Conquest there had been a dissention and another capital had been set up at Quito, Ecuador, but this dissention had been settled and the Inca, Atahuallpa, was ruling the Empire. Pizarro landed with a few men and horses and fell upon the defenseless Indians at Trujillo, the horses being especially frightful to the unarmed inhabitants. This particular section had formerly been under the rule of the Gran Chimu but had been brought under the sway of the Incas in the highlands. The Spaniards found some gold and the natives by signs told them there was more of that in the highlands.

They set forth in a wild race. They happened to find Atahuallpa and his retinue at the baths at Caja Marca and immediately captured him and locked him up. This Son of the Sun was extremely sacred to the natives and by signs they managed to ask what ransom would be required to free the ruler. There happened to be a huge stone room in the town (now used as a nun's school) and there was a white line "a man and a half from the floor." Pizarro took the spokesman of the natives to the door and showed them the room and the white line and told them if they would fill it with gold up to that line he would set Atahuallpa free. Within a few hours the word went forth by runners and millions of people were at work gathering gold and trundling it toward Caja Marca. They brought life-sized animals, slabs, paving bricks, sacks of gold, and soon filled it heaping full above the line. Other tons of gold was on the way but Pizarro decided to put the Inca to death and they took him to Quito and after giving him his choice by means of signs and waving a crucifix before his eyes whether he would die an infidel or embrace Christianity, he nodded his head, was christened Francisco, and strangled with the garrote.

It was the gold that was on the way that has given rise to myriad hidden treasure stories. Some say the natives tossed their burdens in the lakes, hid them in caves and holes in the ground and in cellars, when word came to them the ruler had been treacherously executed in spite of the ransom. The Spaniards ran amok taking all gold they could rip from palaces and temples and hundreds of galleons of gold started to Spain. Twenty-two billions of dollars went across the bar into Madrid in the space of a few years besides what the English and other pirates captured en route and what was locally stolen in Panama and other places. There is hardly an island along the Pacific coast between Panama and Chile which hasn't its treasure story and scores of these stories could easily be true. There is also little doubt but what these frail vessels went to the bottom in storms with cargoes of gold both on the Pacific side and Atlantic side of the South American continent and mutineers possibly made off with other cargoes. Considering the sort of ships they used and the number of them ferrying gold such a long distance it is readily believable that they delivered three-fourths of what they set out with and that they merely got what the natives had not been able to hide in Peru and Ecuador. Thus golden treasure could be concealed almost anywhere near Cuzco and Quito today and possibly is. It is beyond my power in a mere letter to set forth the various tales which have been recorded but *I do not know of any great Inca treasure that has ever been unearthed.*

There has been plenty of treasure found in this region but not Inca treasure. It is treasure of realms brought under the sway of the Incas previous to the advent of the Spaniards. The Incas knew how to farm potatoes and millet, how to graze llama and alpacas, to cut stone and construct buildings, and how to have plenty to eat at all times. Consequently they reached out for other Indians by means of seductive overtures that they would be better off under them and when they took them under their wings they did not violate their graves or rob their treasures. Thus it has been mainly in these old burial places where most of the great treasures have been found. In my time in Peru it was open season on these burial places and you could see the ground strewn with mummified corpses from the graves whose eyes were crystals to represent real eyes and whose fingers were covered with golden rings. I met a German youth with an armful of such and I closely examined the bracelets and rings. I met another fellow who had recovered a fortune in gold from a rich *huaca* or grave.

As I said before, Pizarro landed on the desert coast at what is now Salaverry, near Trujillo, and this region for eight hundred miles along the coast had been ruled by the Gran Chimu. These particular people were sea worshippers and their God was a fish but it was also mixed up with celestial worship. So they moulded gold into fish and sea representations besides half-moons, suns, stars, etc. In large and small quantities this gold was buried with the owners and some eighty thousand graves were desecrated by *huaca* hunters in this neighborhood. The largest single treasure unearthed and which can be definitely proven was the so-called "little fish" treasure which ran to $3,000,000. The treasure hunters double-crossed the Indian chief who pointed it out and he refused to point out the so-called "big fish" treasure which was supposed to be ten times as large.

If the Peruvian government had not shut down on treasure hunting and mounted guards over this country I am quite sure I can locate the "big fish" hoard for I spent a lot of time figuring on it and was almost ready to make the attempt when the edict was suddenly issued. Many other things of value were carried off from this vicinity such as pottery, "whistling ducks" or water bottles, linen shirts in good state of repair (worth $2,500), dolls, marionettes performing work, etc. The old reservoir system is being used by a German cane plantation at the present time.

The other treasure field was at Pachamarca, near Lima. The people there believed in an invisible God and this was their holy city. The road had a line in the middle and those who had been on the pilgrimage were so holy they couldn't have any truck with the ones on the way and the traffic ran about like on a modern highway. About eighty thousand graves were desecrated at this place. A box of the artificial eyes got to Maiden Lane, New York, and the stone cutters in trying to polish these crystals they used, all got sore eyes from the dust. I believe they decided it was some sort of fish eye, pumped full of a liquid which crystallized. Anyhow they did not pan out for cutting purposes.

Besides these two great treasure fields there were smaller ones at villages in both conquered countries and also in other smaller conquered countries in various parts. The Valverde treasure you speak of was located in Ecuador and was supposed to have been found by a native who found the directions on a piece of paper and went by three peaks and who later lost the gift of finding it. There was also another story of the Bishop of Lima, who left with his cathedral treasure and was killed and the treasure supposed to have been buried on some island off the coast.

The trouble with looking for treasure in South America now is the fact the governments have decided to bar the door after the horse was stolen. They chased us in Ecuador when we tried to open up a mound and they follow you about in Peru with a bayonet.

FEATHERING a nest for the birds.

Request:—The Burroughs Nature Club of which I am president, has been allowed six-hundred square feet of space in the Better Homes Exposition and we desire to construct a bird-house sanctuary. Where can we obtain all the ideas that can be incorporated in the plan?

S. J. Renz, D. D. S., Kansas City, Mo.

Reply by Mr. Davis Quinn:—You will find a large amount of material for your purpose in the following bulletins which you may secure, at five cents each, from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.

Homes for Birds, F. B. No. 1456

How to Attract Birds in East Central States, F. B. No. 912

If you will write to the Emergency Conservation Committee, Mrs. C. N. Edge, 734 Lexington Ave., New York, N. Y., and state your problem, I am sure Mrs. Edge will be glad to send you a number of interesting pamphlets and circulars on bird protection and conservation.

FISH stories and the strong-armed game warden.

Request:—I read in *Camp-Fire* of February *Adventure* of the interesting legal case of salvage described in Roy Horn's story "No Right of Way." Then on the next page I read: "Fishing with no paraphernalia" in *Ask Adventure*, which brings up another interesting legal case:

Last spring a boy in Kent, Conn., caught with his bare hands a three and a half pound trout which had wandered into shallow water in the pond at Kent School. News of so large a trout soon reached the ears of the game warden. He arrested the boy for breaking the game laws. A good-natured judge let the boy off with a warning. What's the law there?

Frank Donaldson, New York, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. John B. Thompson:—Can't

tell you about the legal merits of the case you mention. But every state has the right to protect the game and fish raised within the state as it deems fit. They have no longer control over migratory birds so each state has laws suited to its fish and game protection.

Here's another strange fish story but true. At Ottawa, Ont., Canada, close to where the Rideau river flows into the Ottawa river, one afternoon some boys were throwing sticks for a black cocker spaniel to retrieve. The cocker's tail had not been docked. A huge muscallunge chased that tail suddenly and was so eager to get hold of it that it actually beached itself on a rocky shoal, and the boys killed it with rocks. They exhibited their trophy all over town. No prosecution ensued.

New Brunswick has a law which declares that neither trout nor salmon can be taken in the streams and lakes except with artificial flies.

STAMPS printed on "scrap paper."

Request:—I am a collector of war relics and material. Recently I read that some country printed stamps on the back of German war maps. Although I have searched I can find no trace of this. Can you tell me if this is true? What country? Approximate cost of a sheet?

—H. Hayward Thresher, Miami Beach, Fla.

Reply by Dr. H. A. Davis:—You have in mind, no doubt, the first stamp issued by Latvia, republic bordering on the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Riga. This was created a sovereign state following the World War. Its first stamps were printed on the back of German war maps. For your purpose I suggest that you obtain a complete sheet of two hundred and twenty-eight stamps which would give you a complete map on the reverse. This stamp was issued both imperforated and perforated, and the imperforated kind would be the better for your purpose.

The sheet may be framed with a glass both back and front (sheet between two panes of glass), this showing both the map and the stamps. The sheet in my own collection measures 16⅛ inches by 14¾ inches. The stamp is printed in carmine and of 5k. value. The standard catalog of postage stamps lists it at 5 cents per stamp. You should be able to obtain a sheet from one of the stamp companies listed below. The stamp was issued in 1918. Should you not care for a full sheet a block of four stamps would show a portion of the map on the back, unless taken from the margins of the sheet, in which case the back may be plain, as the map is not as large as the full sheet of stamps.

Try the following stamp dealers:

Nassau Stamp Co., 70 Nassau St., New York City.

Eugene Klein, 200 S. 13th St., Philadelphia, Pa.

The Home of the Postage Stamp, 315 Riverside Drive, New York City.

W. C. Henry Stamp Co., 36 Providence St., Boston, Mass.

C. I. Crowell, Inc., 1 Maiden Lane, New York City.

Marks Stamp Co., Toronto, Ont., Canada.

Vahan Mozian Co., 10 E. 39th St., New York City.

A COURSE of treatment for sick quicksilver.

Request:—About three years ago I expected to go prospecting and so I got a little bottle of quicksilver. But I didn't get out until this summer. In the meantime the quicksilver had not been used for anything else.

When I took the cork out this summer the quicksilver shot out in a fine stream of powder, and I lost over half of it. What I have left doesn't seem to work well.

What happened to this stuff? Does it ever get too old to use?

—Bjarne Gustavsen, Rex, Van.

Reply by Mr. Victor Shaw:—There are a lot of different things that can happen to mercury, and it will not unite (amalgamate) with gold unless it is pure, bright, and clean. When it is tarnished, it will not unite with gold. It tarnishes when exposed too long to the air, especially after having been used quite a bit. It gets darkish and coated by uniting with other substances or metals, like iron, lead, copper, antimony, etc. Often when used in a pan the black sand will tarnish and coat it. Again, sometimes it will separate into very tiny globules or drops, which is called flouring.

If tarnished, grind it in a clean mortar with a solution of cyanide of potassium.

If broken into small globules and coated, it is called *sick*, and in this case you put it into a container with a weak solution of nitric or sulphuric acid, or cyanide, which causes it to unite.

If coated and dark from contact with oil or grease, it also won't pick up gold. Shake it up with strong lye and that will take out the grease.

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Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 161 W. Harrison St., Chicago, Ill.

Coins: *and medals*—HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

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Globe-trotting and vagabonding—ROBERT SPIERS-BENJAMIN, Box 289, Rutgers Univ., New Brunswick, N. J.

Health Building Activities, Hiking — DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

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Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, P. O. Box 102, Titusville, Fla.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 845 W. Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 995 Pine St., San Francisco, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. No. 3, Box 69, Salem, Oregon.

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★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

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Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

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Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, 125 Lambert Rd., Jenkintown, Pa.

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SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, Barro Colorado Is., Laboratory, Frijoles, Canal Zone.

Ethnology: *(Eskimo)*—VICTOR SHAW, 20th & W. Garfield Sts., Seattle, Wash.

Forestry: *in the United States; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

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Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

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★New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

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★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardoss," Suva, Fiji.

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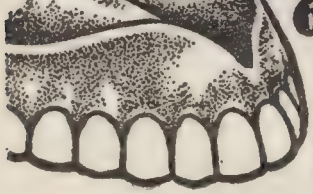

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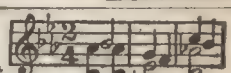

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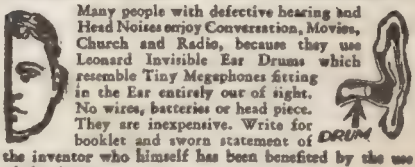

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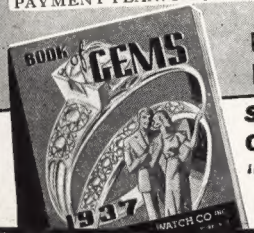

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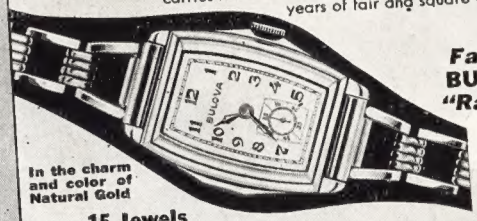

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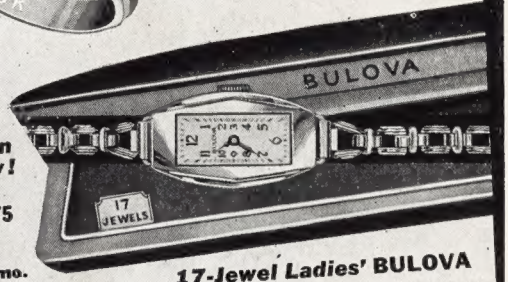

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